

"In the Latter Days, the sun shall rise from the West" • Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of Allah be on him)



Freedom of Speech

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The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908)



AHMADIYYA
MUSLIM COMMUNITY

United States of America

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a religious organization, international in its scope, with branches in 195 countries in Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Australasia, and Europe. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was established in 1889 by Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad(as) (1835-1908) in Qadian, a small and remote village in the Punjabi province of India. He claimed to be the expected reformer of the latter days, the Awaited One of the world community of religions (The Mahdi and Messiah).

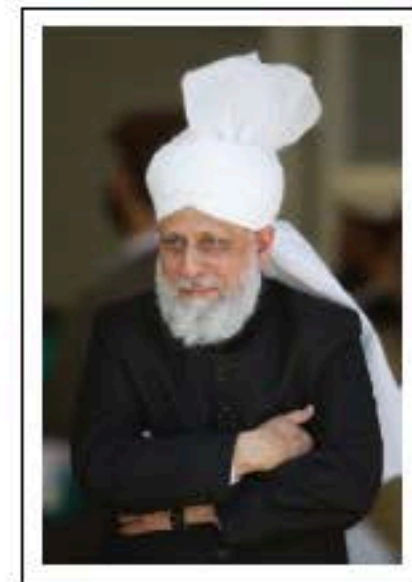
The Movement he started is an embodiment of the benevolent message of Islam – peace, universal brotherhood, and submission to the Will of God – in its pristine purity.

Hadrat Ahmad(as) proclaimed Islam as the religion of man: "The religion of the people of the right path" (98:6). The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was created under divine guidance with the objective to rejuvenate Islamic moral and spiritual values. It encourages interfaith dialogue, diligently defends Islam and tries to correct misunderstandings about Islam in the West. It advocates peace, tolerance, love and understanding among followers of different faiths. It firmly believes in and acts upon the Qur'anic teaching:

"There is no compulsion in religion" (2:257).

It strongly rejects violence and terrorism in any form and for any reason. After the passing of its founder, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been headed by his elected successors. The present Head of the Community, Hadrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, was elected in 2003. His official title is Khalifat-ul-Masih V or Fifth Successor of the Promised Messiah.

www.alislam.org



Hadrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad,
Khalifat-ul-Masih V

The Muslim Sunrise

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Muslims follow the name of God's prophets with the prayer *alaehis salaam* or 'may peace be upon him,' and for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, *sallallahu alaehi wasallam* or 'may peace and blessings of God be upon him.' Companions of prophets and righteous personalities who have passed away are saluted by *radhi-Allahu anhu/a* or 'may Allah be pleased with him/her.' While such salutations sometimes are not set out in the text for readability, we encourage readers to offer these prayers as if set out in full.

Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (1872-1957) was the first Ahmadiyya Muslim missionary to arrive in America. In 1921, he founded the Muslim Sunrise, which stands today as the longest running Muslim publication in America. The magazine seeks to open discussions on Islam and topics relating to religion in general. It highlights the role of Islam in an ever changing global society. It provides a platform for public opinion on contemporary issues and presenting their solutions from an Islamic perspective.



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ①

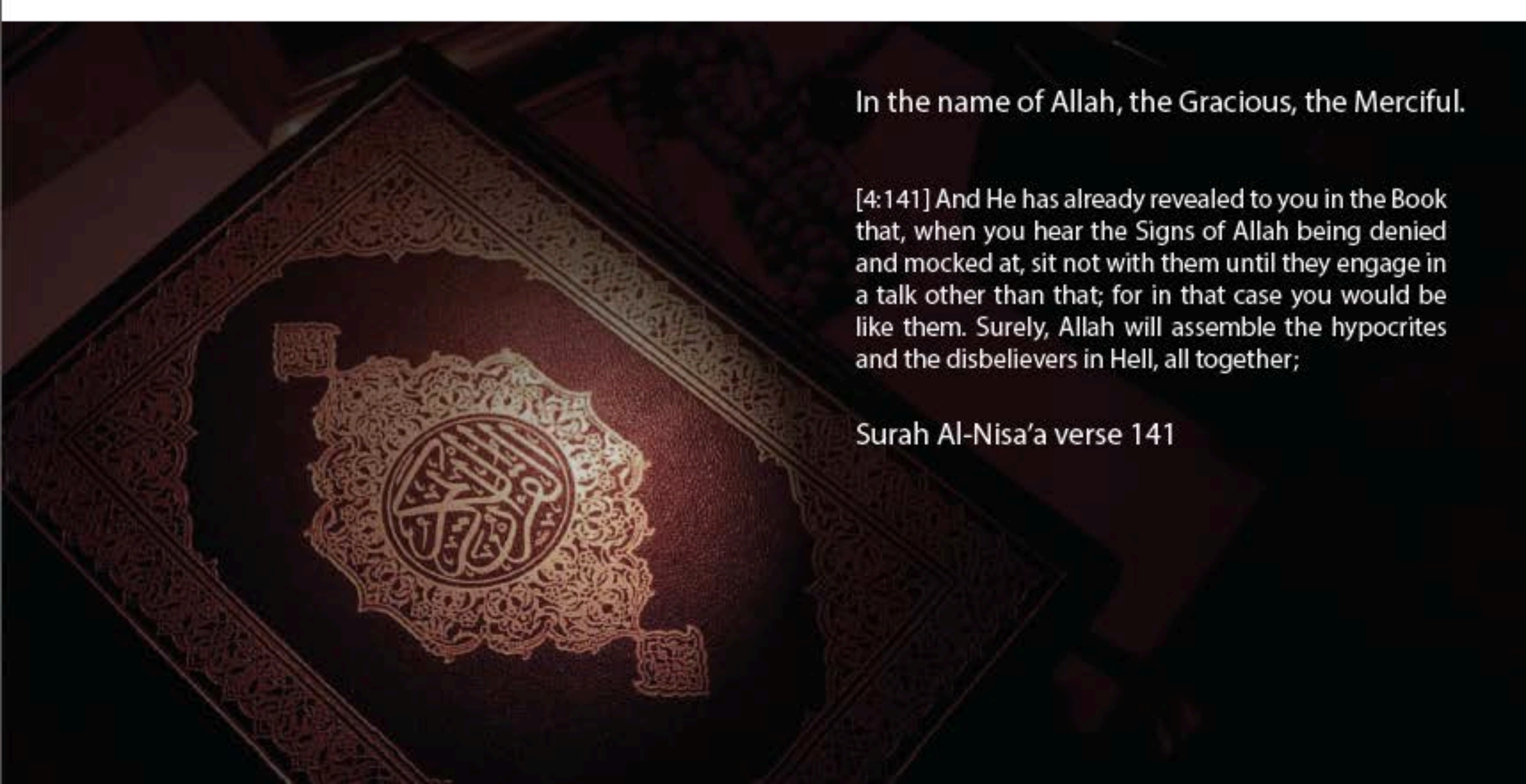
FROM THE HOLY QUR'AN

سَمِعْتُمْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ يُكْفَرُ بِهَا وَيُسْتَهْزَأُ بِهَا
فَلَا تَقْعُدُوا مَعَهُمْ حَتَّى يَخُوضُوا فِي
حَدِيثٍ غَيْرِهِ ۚ إِنَّكُمْ إِذَا أَقْسَلْتُمْ ۖ إِنَّ
اللَّهَ جَامِعُ الْمُنَافِقِينَ وَالْكَافِرِينَ
فِي جَهَنَّمَ جَمِيعًا ①

In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.

[4:141] And He has already revealed to you in the Book that, when you hear the Signs of Allah being denied and mocked at, sit not with them until they engage in a talk other than that; for in that case you would be like them. Surely, Allah will assemble the hypocrites and the disbelievers in Hell, all together;

Surah Al-Nisa'a verse 141



IN THE WORDS OF THE PROMISED MESSIAH^(as)

Respect of Prophets

(Message of Peace, page 22, 23, from Alislam.org, Library of books)

If the faculty of reasoning is employed, the good or evil of anything becomes manifest from the fruit it bears. Needless for me to discuss the consequences of abusing and reviling the holy Prophets of God, who have been seen and accepted by hundreds and millions of people; there is hardly a people who have not themselves witnessed the outcome of the bitter fruit of such practices.

O Dear Ones! Age-old experience and repeated trials have established, without question, that to insult and abuse the Prophets and Messengers of different countries and peoples is such a deadly poison which not only destroys the body but also kills the soul, thereby ruining the worldly prospects as well as the spiritual. A country whose inhabitants are always after finding faults in the leaders of others, and constantly assassinate their characters, can never rest in peace themselves. Such people can never achieve true unity who, individually or mutually, refer to each other's Prophets or saints or divines with malice or foul language. Who would not be outraged at the insults hurled at their Prophet or leader? In particular, Muslims are such people who, although they do not believe their Prophet to be God or the son of God, do regard him to be the most revered of all the holy men born of a human mother. To make peace with a sincere Muslim is not possible unless during discussion, their Holy prophet(sa) is mentioned with respect and refined language.

As for us (The Muslims) we never use indecent language with regard to the Prophets of other peoples. In fact, we believe that for all the Prophets who have come to different peoples of the world and have been accepted by millions of people in all parts of the world, and love for them and their greatness has been firmly established in any one part of the world, and further that this state of devotion and love for them has endured the test of time, is evidence enough of their truthfulness. Had they not been from God, they could not have been accepted on such a wide scale by millions upon millions of hearts. God does not bestow such honor upon those whom He favors not. If an imposter aspires to occupy their position, he is soon brought to ruin.



EDITION

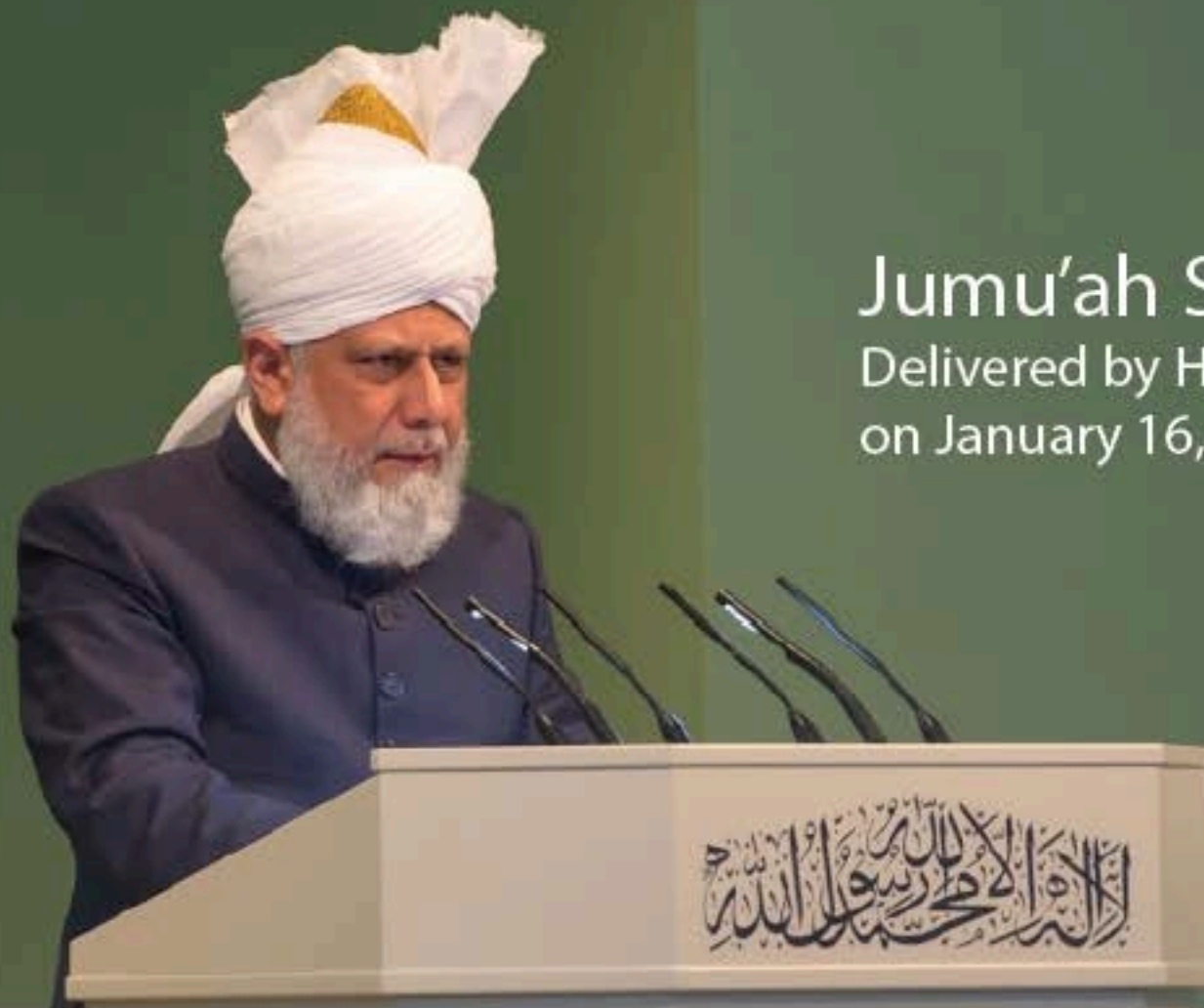
SPRING 2015

In the aftermath of the heinous attack on the French magazine Charlie Hebdo, the subject of free speech garnered prominent headlines. It became part and parcel of the globally televised of the attack itself. Overnight Hebdo became a symbol for free speech. But, should it be? Hebdo's editorial staff would have us defend the practice of insulting religious figures like Jesus(as) and Muhammad(sa) under the guise of "free speech." We respectfully disagree.

Setting limits on free speech has been debated fiercely for many centuries all around the world. In the U.S., libel, slander, child pornography, and falsely yelling fire in a crowded theater are all unprotected by the first amendment, and punishable under the law. Thus, contrary to what some might suggest, there should be and indeed are limits to free speech—both in the U.S. and in Islam. But such limits do not exist to stifle free speech, so much as to promote it. By prohibiting only the worst forms of speech, we create an environment where all other speech is protected.

A Prophet of God, for example, comes to people when they are engrossed in erroneous beliefs; when he speaks, he is the lone voice of reason, and invariably persecuted for his speech. Why then would he be the one to limit free speech, within reason.

This issue examines several complex topics, including what exactly is free speech and its limits within Islam, and how blasphemy should be addressed (or not addressed) in Islamic law. It includes extracts from the sermon of the Khalifah of Islam, His Holiness Mirza Masroor Ahmad(aba), on this very subject. We also juxtapose the actions of misguided Muslims in response to blasphemy with the response of the Holy Prophet Muhammad(sa) himself. At the same time, we take a critical eye to what transpired in France following the attacks in Paris. We trust that those who wish to exercise their right to free speech responsibly will find this issue informative.



Jumu'ah Sermon Synopsis

Delivered by Hadrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad
on January 16, 2015

"Allah and His angels send blessings on the Prophet. O ye who believe! you also invoke blessings on him and salute him with the salutation of peace." (33:57)

This verse elucidates that God and His angels send blessings and salutations on the Holy Prophet(sa). Thus, those who employ various tactics to impede or lessen the advancement of this Prophet will never succeed. Those who make wrong allegations against him and ridicule him presume they can succeed. Their conspiracies cannot harm this beloved of God in any way at all. With the grace of God attainment of the objective for which the Holy Prophet(sa) was sent will continue to come to pass. Indeed, in this age God sent the true and ardent devotee of the Holy Prophet(sa) for this attainment and opened new avenues to spread the beautiful teachings of Islam.

The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) was sent for all ages and all nations by God and for this He is facilitating ways and means through His grace. Neither did the Prophet's opponent succeed in the past nor will they now. This is God's decree and a true Muslim should not be concerned about this at all. However, true Muslims should be cognisant of the task given to them which is to profusely invoke Durood (salutations and blessings) on the Holy Prophet (sa) to exalt him just as God and His angels do. To join those who advance the causes of the Prophet(sa) and along with God and His angels invoke Durood on the Holy Prophet(sa) People calling themselves Muslim recently attacked the offices of a publication in France and killed 12 people. This was briefly

mentioned in last Friday sermon and Ahmadis were urged to invoke Darood. Triumph of Islam will not be through murder and mayhem, rather we will succeed in our objective by invoking Durood on the Prophet(sa). It was also mentioned that [the publication] could wrongly react to the attack and this was to be expected of them. They have printed caricatures once again which have caused us hurt yet again as indeed they would hurt any true Muslim. Whatever this publication, called Charlie Hebdo, did a few years ago had been forgotten but the act of those called Muslims ignited it once more. In the past many western leaders had criticized the publication and many governments did not allow re-producing whatever it printed. However after last week's attacks many sensible leaders have supported it and various sources have helped it with millions of dollars. Its regular circulation was 60,000 and it was on the verge of closing down. Yet, due to people called Muslims five million copies of the magazine are now published. People estimate the publication has been given a new lease of life of further ten to twelve years whereas it may not have lasted six months.

Those who attacked the offices of this magazine not only fanned wrongful image of the teachings of Islam but also resurrected a dead enemy. If only Muslim organizations which perpetrate atrocities in the name of Islam understood that the loving teaching of Islam will bring people sooner into the fold of Islam. Worldly people are blind to faith. Let alone the Prophet(sa) they even mock God. If we respond to ignorance with ignorance we would be committing greater ignorance.

God commands to remove oneself from such situations. Socializing with such people or to concur with them makes us sinful but if we respond to their wrong actions with wrong actions and they end up degrading our Prophet(sa), this also makes us party to their sin. True Muslims should avoid such practices and leave everything with God Who has stated that when everyone will return to Him they will bear the consequences of such actions. In this age the enemy of Islam harms Islam and the Holy Prophet(sa) not with force but with such petty ploys. By stating that God and His angels send blessings on the Prophet the principle is explained that these ploys cannot harm the status of the Holy Prophet(sa) in the least. Rather than react with similar ignorance true Muslims invoke blessings and salutations on the Prophet(sa).

People who did not think much of this vulgar publication are now supporting it in the name of freedom of speech. However, there are some fair-minded people who did not like the vulgar depictions and have held the management of the magazine responsible. A cofounder of Charlie Hebdo named Henri Roussel has said that images published by the magazine were provocative and its editor dragged the team to death. He has said that this was contrary to their basic policy.

Pope has also given a very good statement. He said freedom of speech has limits and religions should be treated with respect so that people's faiths were not insulted or ridiculed. To illustrate his point Pope said his close friend who organizes his tours could expect a punch if he cursed his mother. Indeed, Pope has given a very realistic statement. Muslims should have sense and not react inappropriately.

The media is most influential all over the world and plays a role in igniting a given situation and well as diffusing it. After this incident for the first time media approached us and asked Jama'at Ahmadiyya's views here in the UK and also in other places. We told them this was an un-Islamic act and we expressed our commiseration but we maintained that freedom of speech should have limits otherwise those who inflame others' sentiments are responsible. Here in the UK Jama'at members appeared on SKY News, News 5, BBC Radio, LBC, BBC Leeds and London Live and in USA on Fox TV and CNN. Canadian newspapers also covered our views as did media in Greece, Ireland, France and various papers in USA. Many interviews were carried out in television studios to convey the true Islamic stance. Here Ameer Sahib as well as Imam Sahib Ata ul Rashed were interviewed on television. In USA, Canada and France our representatives appeared on television and papers carried articles written by Ahmadis. Our teams did a good job of discharging their duties everywhere.

A Canadian journalist wrote what could be the reason that in spite of being a small sect of Islam Ahmadiyya have been represented so much in the media and conveyed the real teaching of Islam. It is indeed God's decree that the Jama'at of the true and ardent devotee of the Holy Prophet(sa) is to convey the true teaching of Islam to the world. It is our responsibility and every Ahmadi should convey the message within their own sphere that wrong reactions only produce disorder and the global situation will be inflamed spreading all over. Neither people should be provoked by wrong reactions nor should God's chastisement be called on through them.

Ahamdis have to tread the line of: '...O ye who believe! you also invoke blessings on him and salute him with the salutation of peace.' True believers should try their utmost to abide by this. Just as insight increases, understanding of the wisdom behind matters is attained. It is also Islam's teaching to attain knowledge. When the insight to abide by God's commandments is attained practice also improves.

In Ahadith the benefits of invoking Durood are mentioned under various narrations:

The Holy Prophet(sa) said: On the Day of Judgement the person who sends the most blessings on me will be closest to me.

He also said: On the Day of Judgement at each dreadful phase of the Day, that person will be closest to me who would have sent the most blessings on me in the world.

The Holy Prophet(sa) said that the Durood of God and His angels was sufficient for him. The practice of invoking Durood is only an opportunity given by God to true believers to garner merit for themselves.

Once a man came in the presence of the Holy Prophet(sa) and offered Salat and then prayed: 'O God forgive me and have mercy on me. The Holy Prophet(sa) said to him that he had been a little hasty. He should have instead glorified and praised God, invoked Durood on the Prophet and then supplicated God.

The Holy Prophet(sa) said when you listen to the voice of the muezzin calling for Prayer repeat his words and then invoke Durood on me. The person who invokes Durood has ten-fold blessings from God. The Prophet(sa) also said seek mediation for me as this is a status from among the ranks of Paradise and will only be granted to one servant of God and I have hope that it will be me. Intercession will be halal for whoever will seek mediation for me.

Hadrat Umer (may Allah be pleased with him) said that prayer is suspended between the earth and the heavens and unless

Durood is invoked on the Holy Prophet(sa), no part of the prayer goes upwards.

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) laid great emphasis on invoking Durood. Advising one of his followers he said stay focussed in invoking Durood and seek blessings for the Holy Prophet(sa) with the sincerity and discernment with which one seeks blessings for a dear one. Seek with great humility and there should be no pretence in this humility and prayer. Rather pray for the Holy Prophet(sa) with the spirit of true friendship and love. Seek those blessings with sincere heart and soul for the Holy Prophet(sa) which are inherent in Durood. It is a sign of personal love that one never tires, is not disheartened and invokes Durood with no involvement of vested interests and only recites it for Divine blessings for the Holy Prophet(sa).

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) also said although the Holy Prophet is not in need of anyone's prayers but there is a very profound reason behind invoking Durood. A person who seeks blessings for another owing to personal love becomes a part of them. The beneficence granted to the person for whom blessings are sought is also granted to the person seeking blessings. And because God's beneficences on the Holy Prophet(sa) are boundless anyone who invokes Durood on him owing to personal love gets a measure of the boundless blessings. However, very few instances of such spiritual fervor and personal love can be seen.

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) wrote: Observe the sincerity and faithfulness of our Holy Prophet(sa) in how he dealt with every evil scheme. He endured all kind of difficulties and hardships but remained sanguine. It was owing to this sincerity and faithfulness that Allah the Exalted blessed him and stated: 'Allah and His angels send blessings on the Prophet. O ye who believe! you also invoke blessings on him and salute him with the salutation of peace.' This verse clearly shows that such were the practices of the Holy Prophet(sa) that Allah the Exalted did not use any special word to praise them or to condense his qualities. Words could be found but were not employed. That is, his blessed practice was far above condensation. No verse of this kind has been used for the glory of any other Prophet. So sincere and pure was his soul and his practices were so cherished in the sight of God that Allah the Exalted commanded for the rest of time that people should invoke Durood on him by way of gratefulness.' (Report Jalsa Salana pp. 50-51 – Tafseer the Promised Messiah, Vol. III, p. 730)

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said: It became essential to recite Durood in every Salat to enhance love for the Holy Prophet(sa) and to renew it.

He also said: 'Durood is a great source of attaining steadfastness. Recite Durood abundantly, not as a ritual or mere habit but while keeping in view the grace and bounties of the Holy Prophet(sa). Recite it to elevate his station and for his success. As a result of this you will attain the sweet and delicious fruit of acceptance of prayer.'

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) also said: 'How blessed is this era that merely with His grace, Allah the Exalted has willed the blessed objective for the manifestation of the greatness of the Holy Prophet(sa) during these tumultuous days; has arranged for the triumph of Islam from the Divine and established a mission. I would like to ask those people who have compassion for Islam and who have respect and consideration for it in their hearts that can they say that there has been a time worse than this in which this such abuse and disrespect of the Holy Prophet(sa) taken place and the Holy Qur'an been so blasphemed? I am then deeply saddened and distressed by the condition of the Muslims and at times I get anxious with this grief that there remains not even enough feeling in them to sense this disgrace. Did Allah the Exalted not regard any honour for the Holy Prophet(sa) in that would He not have established a Divine mission on this extent of abuse to silence these opponents of Islam and to spread his greatness and purity in the world. In the event that Allah the Exalted and His angels invoke blessings and salutations on the Holy Prophet(sa), how essential it is to manifest these salutations at this time of abuse and Allah the Exalted has manifested this in the shape of this mission.' (Malfuzat Vol. 3, pp. 8-9, New Edition – The Blessed Model of the Holy Prophet and the Caricatures, pp. 85-86)

Writing to one of his followers the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) advised to be profoundly aware that every action is free of being a ritual or force of habit and is instead done with gushing and heart-felt love. For example Durood should not be recited in the parrot-like fashion that people generally do. They neither have absolute sincerity for the Holy Prophet(sa) nor do they seek blessings for him from God. Rather, it should be one's creed when reciting Durood that love of the Holy Prophet(sa) reaches the level where one's heart would not even suggest to have the same degree of love for another from the start of time till the end or consider that a person could come in the future who could surpass such love. This creed can be established by being prepared to endure all imaginable difficulties with sincerity of heart for his love just as those who loved the Holy Prophet(sa) endured difficulties out of his love in the past. The heart should not be deterred to endure any imaginable or conceivable hardship and there should be no conceivable commandment from which one would hesitate. One should not have the same love for any other in creation. Once this creed is established Durood should be recited with the objective of invoking God's complete blessings on His Prophet(sa).

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said this should be carried out with utmost focus and concentration just like when one prays with concentration when faced with difficulties. In fact one should recite Durood with even greater humility and tenderness and this should have no element of personal fulfilment and one should purely recite Durood to invoke salutations and blessings on the Holy Prophet(sa) and for his grandeur to illumine in this world and in the Hereafter. Explaining how to identify that one has attained required focus and concentration during Durood the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said one sign is that one often weeps during it and feels its impact in the fibre of one's being and experiences a state in between wakefulness and sleep.

Writing to one of his followers the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said: Keep engaged in Tahajjud Prayer and commonly repeated prayers. There are many blessings in Tahajjud. Idleness is worthless. An idle and laid-back [person] carries no weight. God Almighty says: 'As for those who strive in Our path -We will surely guide them in Our ways...' (29:70) The preferred Durud is, which was uttered by the blessed tongue of the Holy Prophet(sa) and that is:

O Allah, Bless Muhammad and the people of Muhammad as You did bless Abraham and the people of Abraham. You are indeed the Praiseworthy, the Glorious.

O Allah, Prosper Muhammad and the people of Muhammad as You did prosper Abraham and the people of Abraham. You are indeed the Praiseworthy, the Glorious.

The words said by a pious person certainly have a lot of blessings in them. It should, there, be understood how blessed would be the words uttered by one who is chief of the righteous and the commander of the Prophets. In short from all the versions of Durud this one is the most blessed one. This is the chant of this humble person and it is not important to restrict it to any amount. [It] should be recited with sincerity, love and humility and should be recited until such time that one develops a state of tender-heartedness, is entranced and inspired, feels deep conviction, and discernment in the breast.' (Maktubat e Ahmadiyya Vol. I, pp. 17 – 18 - The Blessed Model of the Holy Prophet and the Caricatures, pp. 79-80)

Hadrat Musleh Maud (may Allah be pleased with him) gave the following perspective about invoking Durood which Huzoor likes a lot.

'When we pray for others in a way our prayer also becomes a source of elevation of our station. While our recitation of Durood elevates the station of the Holy Prophet(sa) it also increases our station and blessings reach him and then

For example when something is placed in a sieve it passes through it and cascades down. Similarly God has made the Holy Prophet(sa) like a sieve for the Ummah. First God grants blessings to him and then those blessings also reach us through his agency. As a result of us invoking Durood God elevates the station of the Holy Prophet(sa) and certainly God also tells the Holy Prophet that this gift is from such and such believer. This inspires the Prophet(sa) to pray for us and because of his prayer God grants us a measure of His blessings.

Personally speaking when I go to the grave side of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) for prayer my way is that I first pray for the Holy Prophet(sa) and after this I pray for the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace). I then pray, O God, I do not have anything that I could present as a gift to these holy persons. Whatever I have is of no benefit to them. And You have everything, therefore I pray and beseech You to do me a favour and give them a gift in Paradise that they have never received in Paradise before. On this they would definitely ask O Allah! From whom has this gift come? When God informs them who has sent the gift, they pray for the person and thus the person's station is elevated. It is proven from the Holy Qur'an and Ahadith ...no one can deny that prayers are certainly beneficial to the deceased.

The Holy Qur'an has stated: '...greet ye with a better prayer...' (4:87) and drawn our attention that when someone gifts you reciprocate with a better gift or at least a similar gift. According to this verse of the Holy Qur'an when we pray for the Holy Prophet(sa) or the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) and invoke Durood and salutations on them, as a result of our prayer and on behalf of us God would give them a gift. We do not know what the bounties of Paradise are but God is well aware of them. When we pray O' God! Grant a gift to the Holy Prophet(sa) which he has not received before it is a given that when that gift is given to him from God he is also informed who it is from. How can it be that after knowing this he does nothing and does not pray for the person who has sent the gift! His soul bows before God saying O God, grant them good recompense on our behalf. Thus, according to '...greet ye with a better prayer...' the prayer will be reverted to the person invoking Durood and will be a source of elevation of his station. This is a means through which without committing anything idolatrous we can avail benefit on a personal as well as a communal/national level.'

Huzoor also explained the distinction of the two parts of Durood. In the first part words اللهم صلى على (O Allah, bless...) are recited. According to lexicon صلى denotes esteem and signifies: O Allah, elevate the name of the Holy Prophet(sa) in this world and give success and triumph to his message.

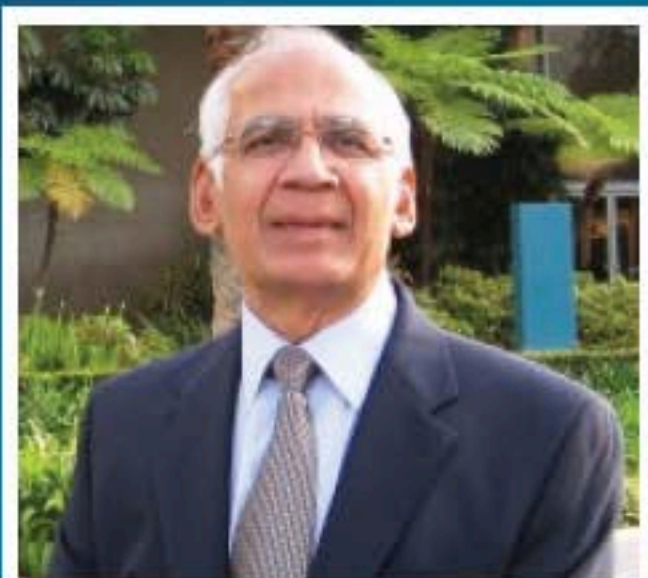
Grant him greatness through permanence and perpetuation of his Shariah. Grant him greatness in the Hereafter through accepting his intercession for his Ummah and increasing their reward and recompose manifold.

In the second part words **اللهم بارك على** (O Allah, prosper...) are recited. They signify: O Allah, establish all the respect, greatness, great glory and holiness that You have destined for the Holy Prophet(sa) and grant it eternity and perpetuity.

In summary in **اللهم صلى على** the prayer is for the triumph and perpetuation of his Shariah and for the Ummah to receive the beneficence of his intercession.

In **اللهم بارك على** the prayer is for the eternalness of his honour, greatness, glory and holiness.

May God enable us to recite Durood in the true sense and may we attain nearness of God due to it as well as always increase our love for the Holy Prophet(sa) and may we always expend our capacities in spreading his Shariah. May we always play a positive role in removing disorder from the world according to his teachings! May



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Professor of Pediatrics and Child Health,
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“ The way it was explained to me is that Muhammad was a very ordinary man. He could not read, didn't know [how] to write. In fact, he was an illiterate.

And we're talking about twelve [actually about fourteen] hundred years ago. You have someone illiterate making profound pronouncements and statements and that are amazingly accurate about scientific nature.

And I personally can't see how this could be a mere chance. There are too many accuracies and, like Dr. Moore, I have no difficulty in my mind that this is a divine inspiration or revelation which led him to these statements.

”

BLASPHEMY AND FREEDOM OF PRESS

Mubasher Ahmad, M.A. LL.B

Blasphemy is a contemptuous verbal or written abuse, or a physical action, to degrade and insult God or anything held as sacred by a faith community. However, what is sacred to one faith community may not necessarily be seen as sacred by the others. Social and moral values demand that we remain sensitive to the genuinely spiritual feelings of others, and are careful how we express our differences with each other. No doubt, freedom of the press comes along with freedom of speech, and it is among one of the cherished rights; and this right has gained momentum in recent times under the protection of law. But still the question remains: When does freedom of the press cross the lines of decency by making irreverent and offensive statements or artistic reproductions in print, and thus hurting the feelings of millions? When does a written or printed expression become unacceptable by moral, religious or legal standards?

It is a fact that what is sacred to one faith community may not necessarily be considered as sanctified by the others. For example, in India, majority of the Hindus believe that the cow is a sacred animal, and it should be revered no less than one's own mother. They call it "Cow the Mother". For them, it is a sin to hurt or kill a cow. So, in many Indian cities, we find cows freely roaming around even in busy traffic lanes, and no one bothers them. But for Muslims and Christians living in India, and elsewhere in the world, beef is a normal food item, and there is no sin at all in killing a cow. Another example is that in the Old Testament, it is written: "Anyone who blasphemes the name of the Lord must be put to death. The entire assembly must stone him" (Leviticus 24:16). But in the Hindu tradition there are so many gods and goddesses, and some of them had been at war with each other, that to degrade any specific deity is not taken seriously. In some Hindu temples, gods and goddesses are depicted naked and in unashamed intimate positions. Some Hindus even worship the male reproductive organ carved in stone as a god, and it is not considered an act of blasphemy.

In Islam, the Unity of God is a complete reversal of the Hindu polytheistic belief system. Oneness or Unity of God is the bedrock religious belief in Islam, and to consider anyone else equal to God and to worship him or her is a grievous sin. Islam reinforces the Biblical commandments of God that "You shall have no other gods before me"; and "you shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below" (Exodus 20).

For this very reason, thinking that his followers may not fall in error and start worshipping him as an idol, the Holy Prophet of Islam forbade his followers to draw any picture or image of him. He was an earthly human, and did not want to see Muslims committing the grievous mistake of raising the status of a man to Divinity, and to start worshipping and loving him like a god. That's why Muslims all over the world take it very seriously and consider it an extreme act of blasphemy if someone draws an imaginary picture of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be on him), to say nothing of depicting him as a caricature or drawing his cartoons.

Therefore, the right to the free press that includes publishing newspapers, magazines and other printed material, regardless how important it might be, cannot be without boundaries, without some limits. There have to be some moral and legal restrictions.

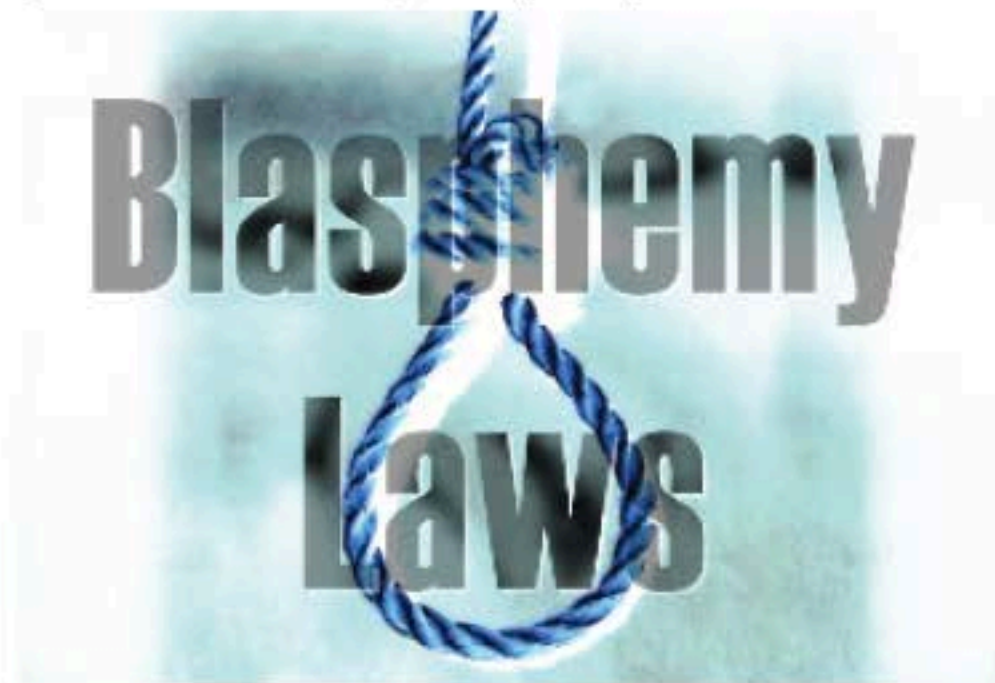
In the Holy Quran there is no worldly punishment at all prescribed for blasphemy. The Holy Quran clearly commands:

"There is no compulsion in matters of faith, for surely guidance has been made manifest and distinct from error" (2:257).

It also instructs not to defame other's deities. Chapter 6 of the Holy Quran, Verse number 109 instructs us: "Do not vilify those (deities) that they call upon beside God, in case, in their hostility and ignorance, they may vilify God" (6:109). In other words, Muslims are prohibited to make any blasphemous and degrading statements against gods of other religions. In this way the spiritual feelings on both sides are taken care of. In addition, Islam teaches us to respect and revere the founders and spiritual leaders of all religions; and calls them Prophets and Messengers of God. No insult in any way or form to any one of the Prophets of God is acceptable. No good Muslim will ever draw a cartoon or caricature, or print any insult or degrading remark against any Prophet of God. Moreover, respect for the sacred revealed Books, especially the Torah, the Psalms of David, and the Gospel of Jesus are mentioned by name as sacred books, and Muslims are asked to respect them as a fundamental part of Islamic faith.

No doubt, there are specific punishments prescribed in the Holy Quran for those who commit crimes against humanity or against the State, but no worldly punishment is prescribed for blasphemy. No physical punishment was ever given by the Prophet of Islam to anyone who either bad-mouthed God, or degraded the Quran or insulted him in person. The punishments that are sometimes considered for acts of blasphemy are in fact for acts of rebellion or treachery against the State, for deeds that create lawlessness and anarchy.

In Islam, blasphemy is condemned only on moral and spiritual grounds. Therefore, it is very unfortunate and sad that in some so-called Muslim States instead of raising moral and spiritual awareness among their citizens they have declared blasphemy as a crime, calling upon some very severe punishments, including death penalty in some cases.



Some of the instructions given in the Holy Quran against those who degrade the sacred name of God or defile the noble character of the Holy Prophet, or ridicule the Verses of the Holy Quran are as follows: "If you hear people denying and ridiculing God's revelation, do not sit with them unless they start to talk of other things, or else you yourselves will become like them" (4:140). Similarly, the Holy Quran states: "When the (Muslims) hear frivolous talk, they turn away, saying 'We have our deeds, and you have yours. Peace is with you. We do not seek the company of the foolish people.'" (28:55). Again, the Holy Quran states: "So, celebrate the name of your Lord and devote yourself wholeheartedly to Him. He is Lord of the east and west, there is no god but Him; so take Him as your protector, and patiently endure what they (i.e. the non-believers) say (about God), and ignore them politely" (73:10). In other words, the Holy Quran teaches us not to react violently against those who engage in blasphemy; instead of disputing with them, just ignore them; so that the peace and tranquility of society is not disturbed.

If we carefully study the life of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be on him), it becomes evident that though he was personally insulted, defamed, abused and attacked by many of his opponents, instead of getting equal with them or punishing them, he tried his utmost to persuade them patiently, and tried to stop their wrongful attitude with words of wisdom. He preached to them what was good for them. He forgave them their transgressions even when he had full power and authority to punish them, and he always prayed for them. He left the matter of punishment in the hand of God Who is the Final Judge.



We know that the right of freedom of the press is recognized by most of the modern societies. Many thinkers, philosophers, politicians and religious leaders have worked very hard to gain this entitlement, and most of the democratic countries have made it a part of their constitutions. The American Constitution through its First Amendment, made the freedom of religion, the freedom of speech and the freedom of press as constitutional rights. The General Assembly of the U.N.O. adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and in its Article 19, it declared: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." But still, this right of the freedom of speech and freedom of the press are not without restrictions. This right does not take away restrictions on incitement, false statements of facts, and defamation, obscenity, and child-pornography, use of foul words, threats, compromising the national security, or other constitutionally protected values.

In the same strain, Islam recognizes the right of free expression, but it clearly puts necessary restrictions. God says in the Holy Quran:

"Tell My servants to be courteous in their speech" (17: 54). "A good word is like a good tree; its roots are firm and its branches reach to the sky, yielding constant fruit by its Lord's leave... but an evil word is like a rotten tree, uprooted from the surface of the earth, with no power to endure" (14:25-27).

Islam imposes restrictions on impropriety and vulgarity. The Holy Quran says, "God never enjoins indecencies" (7:29).

"Do not go near indecencies, whether out in the open or concealed" (6:152). And it goes without saying that Islam prohibits false statements, use of foul words and threats. So much so, that the Holy Quran prohibits Muslims to

defame others, even from calling anyone by a derogatory nick name. "Believers, no one group of men make fun of another, who may after all be better than them; no one group of women should deride another, who may after all be better than them; do not speak ill of one another; do not use offensive nicknames for one another" (49:12).

To conclude, Islamic perspective on blasphemy and freedom of the press is this that any printed abuse against God and other sacred objects are prohibited, but there is no worldly punishments, and the right to freedom of speech and freedom of the press are firmly established; but some necessary restrictions are placed for the sake of keeping peace and harmony among different faith communities.



“ In a relatively few ayahs (Quranic verses) is contained a rather comprehensive description of human development from the time of commingling of the gametes through organogenesis. No such distinct and complete record of human development, such as classification, terminology, and description, existed previously. In most, if not all, instances, this description antedates by many centuries the recording of the various stages of human embryonic and fetal development recorded in the traditional scientific literature.”



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CRITIQUING PAKISTAN'S BLASPHEMY LAWS:

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The freedom to practice one's religion is one of the essential rights of all people. This includes the right of all human beings to think as they please, to believe or to not believe as they please, and to practice these beliefs openly, peacefully, and without fear.

When it comes to the peaceful exercise of religion, no government, group, or individual has the right to compel others to act against their conscience or restrain them from practicing their faith. The right to freedom of religion has been protected for hundreds of years through various edicts, and is engrained in many countries' constitutions. Islam itself is the only religion where such tolerance was specifically ordained in the Holy Quran. "There shall be no compulsion in religion: Surely, right has become distinct from wrong..." (Qur'an 2:257). Islam does not even allow the idols of the polytheists to be reviled or maligned. In the Holy Quran it states: "And abuse not those whom they call upon beside Allah, lest they, out of spite, abuse Allah in their ignorance" (Al Quran 6:109).

Islam's concept of freedom of conscience and belief is perfectly compatible with one of the most important documents of our time - the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948. Article 18 of the UDHR declares: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion."

However, such rights continue to be undermined in certain countries. One such country, ironically a Muslim country, is Pakistan, where the right to practice one's religion specifically excludes Ahmadi Muslims. In its 2013 International Religious Freedom Report, the U.S. Department of State indicated, that "In Pakistan, authorities continue to enforce blasphemy laws and laws designed to marginalize the Ahmadiyya Muslim community; these laws continued to restrict religious freedom, and remained the most visible symbols of religious intolerance.

What Is Blasphemy?

To understand Pakistan's Blasphemy laws, we must first delve into the meaning of the term "blasphemy" itself. Blasphemy can be broadly defined as behavior or language that shows disrespect for any prophet or any religion. Blasphemy not only hurts the religious sensibilities of others, but it also disturbs the peace and harmony of any society. According to the proponents of Pakistan's anti-blasphemy laws, Ahmadi Muslims allegedly commit blasphemy by declaring Hadrat



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) as a prophet, and thereby insulting the finality of the prophethood as declared by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa).

History of Blasphemy Laws in Pakistan

While Pakistan was founded as an Islamic state, it exercised freedom of religion as exemplified by the Holy Prophet Muhammad. However, over time, the role of the clergy grew in Pakistan, to such an extent that it infiltrated into the political landscape.

This pressure from the orthodox Muslim clergy reached its apex in September 7, 1974, when the then Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto put into effect a constitutional amendment which declared members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community as 'non-Muslims'. The amendment read as follows:

Amendment of Article 106 of the Constitution.

In the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan hereinafter referred to as the Constitution, in Article 106, in clause (3), after the words "communities" the words and brackets "and persons of Qadiani group or the Lahori group (who call themselves 'Ahmadis') shall be inserted.

Amendment of Article 260 of the Constitution.

In the Constitution, in Article 260, after clause (2) the following new clause shall be added, namely—

A person who does not believe in the absolute and unqualified finality of The Prophethood of MUHAMMAD (Peace be upon him), the last of the Prophets or claims to be a Prophet, in any sense of the word or of any description whatsoever,

after MUHAMMAD (Peace be upon him), or recognizes such a claimant as a Prophet or religious reformer, is not a Muslim for the purposes of the Constitution or law.

As a result, while other religious minorities, who had also been discriminated against, were not affected, the Ahmadi Muslims were essentially thrown out of the religion of Islam altogether.

Subsequently, what commenced was a decade of persecution and killings of Ahmadis throughout Pakistan. However, in 1984, to further its intolerance of Ahmadi Muslims, Pakistan under the rule of the military dictator Zia-ul-Haq, promulgated the anti-Ahmadiyya Ordinance XX. General Zia was again placating to the will of religious extremists, as Bhutto had done before him. Based on Ordinance XX, the Ahmadi Muslims were now forbidden to profess their faith either verbally or in writing. The law could criminalize an Ahmadi Muslim for simply saying the Islamic greeting, "Assalamu Alaikum" or reciting from the Holy Quran. Furthermore, according to this new decree, the members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community could be jailed for three years or fined an arbitrary sum of money for simply professing their faith. They were also now explicitly forbidden to call their houses of worship "mosques" or give the call to Prayer, the "adhan". What this ordinance in reality did was brand every single Ahmadi a criminal for simply "posing as Muslims".



Ordinance XX was tested in the case of Mujibur Rahman v. Government of Pakistan, at which point the federal Shariat court held that the Ordinance was valid. Hence, in 1986, a Criminal Law Act was passed under Section 295-C of the Pakistan Penal Code. This Act became known as the "Blasphemy Law."

The 1986 Act was significant in that it raised the penalty against blasphemy from fine or imprisonment to death. Because the Ahmadi belief in the prophethood of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) was considered blasphemous in so far

as it "defiled the name of Prophet Muhammad," Zia-ul-Haq the Pakistani government had essentially institutionalized the persecution of Ahmadis in Pakistan under Section 295-C (the Blasphemy Law). From this point forward, the mere existence of practicing Ahmadi Muslims could be considered blasphemous and punishable by death.

Since then, the persecution against Ahmadis has amassed with almost three hundred martyrdoms. Ahmadis are openly referred to as "Wajibul Qatl", which is translated as Ahmadis are "worthy of being killed." Or as the Muslim clergy preaches it today, it is the "obligation" of a practicing Muslim to kill an Ahmadi.



Why Pakistan's Blasphemy Laws Are Un-Islamic

Pakistan is the only Muslim nation to explicitly define who is or is not a "Muslim" under its constitution. No doubt, freedom of speech is necessary for the progress and development of a society. But this freedom must not be used to insult the religious practices of others, and certainly not to criminalize the manner in which others practice their faith. That is why, while Islam does forbid blasphemy but does not prescribe any worldly punishment for it.

Discussing this issue, Hadrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (ra), the fourth Khalifah of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community writes: "Blasphemy: Islam goes one step further than any other religion in granting man the freedom of speech and expression. Blasphemy is condemned on moral and ethical grounds, no doubt, but no physical punishment is prescribed for blasphemy in Islam despite the commonly held view in the contemporary world. Having studied the Holy Quran extensively and repeatedly with deep concentration, I have failed to find a single verse which declares blasphemy to be a crime punishable by man. Although the Holy Quran very strongly discourages indecent behavior and indecent talk, or the hurting of the sensitivity of others, with or without rhyme or

or reason, Islam does not advocate the punishment of blasphemy in this world nor vests such authority in anyone." (Islam's Response to Contemporary Issues, page 39)

Blasphemy was Committed Against All the Prophets of God, but No One was Given Permission to Punish.

There has been no Prophet in respect of whom derogatory words were not used. Allah says: "...There is no people to whom a Warner has not been sent" (35:25); "But there never came to them a Prophet but they mocked at him" (43:8); "Then We sent Our Messengers one after the other. Every time there came to a people their Messenger, they treated him as a liar..." (23:45); and "Alas for My servants! There comes not a Messenger to them but they mock at him." (36:31).

Blasphemy was committed against Mary and Jesus, peace be on him. God says: "For their disbelief and for their uttering against Mary a grievous calumny" (4:157). According to this verse the Jews of the time of the prophet Jesus (as) committed a grave blasphemy by declaring his mother, Mary to be unchaste and alleging Jesus to be a child of questionable birth. The Quran mentions many blasphemous utterances of the non-believers and hypocrites against the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw), without mentioning any physical punishment for perpetrators. A few examples are quoted below:

"Verily, those who malign Allah and His Messenger – Allah has cursed them in this world and in the Hereafter, and has prepared for them an abasing punishment" (33:58).

Again it is stated in the Quran that disbelievers made a jest of the Holy Prophet (21:37). He was called 'a mad man' (15:7), they declared: 'there is madness in him' (23:71). He was called 'a victim of deception' (17:48). He was called 'a fabricator' (16:102). Despite the blasphemy against the Holy Prophet (saw) quoted above, Allah advised him: 'We will certainly, suffice thee against those who mock' (15:96).

God Himself was therefore sufficient to deal with those who commit blasphemy against God, the Holy Prophet (saw) or the Holy Quran and He does not allow anyone to interfere in it. The Holy Prophet (saw) was advised by God: "And follow not the disbelievers and hypocrites, and overlook their annoying talk and put thy trust in Allah; for Allah is sufficient as a guardian" (33:49); and "bear patiently what they say" (20:131).

If these were the teachings of the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet (saw) fourteen hundred years ago concerning those who disrespected, or insulted the Holy Prophet, then Pakistan as an Islamic State, has ventured far off the teachings which it purports to be following. Similarly, under the more modern human rights laws, Pakistan's Ordinance has been declared to violate the basic precepts of freedom of religion.

Pakistan's Blasphemy Laws are Against the Precepts of Fundamental Human Rights.

While international human rights organizations have taken notice of this unfortunate situation, they have not been effective in compelling authorities in Pakistan to repeal the ordinance. Amnesty International, the International Commission of Jurists, Human Rights Advocates Inc. USA, Human Rights Watch, etc. have each published reports on the subject.

Pakistan's Blasphemy law blatantly violates Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, goes against the spirit of the United Nations Charter as well as the UN General Assembly's Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination based on Religion or Belief.

The UN Charter obliges all member nations to promote "universal respect for, and observance of, human rights" and to take "joint and separate action" to that end.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is an advisory declaration adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (A/RES/217, 10 December 1948 at Palais de Chaillot, Paris). It consists of a Preamble and 30 articles setting forth the human rights and fundamental freedoms to which all men and women, everywhere in the world, are entitled, without any discrimination



Article 18 of the UDHR reads:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

The UN Sub-commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities expressed its 'grave concern' at the promulgation of Ordinance XX, and requested the UN Commission on Human Rights to call on the Government of Pakistan to repeal it (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1985/L.42 of 27 August 1985). It is nevertheless relentlessly applied.

Since 1984, hundreds of Ahmadis have been murdered because of their faith, and the authorities have not prosecuted even 5% of the assailants. In 2010, 86 Ahmadi worshipers were slain in two mosques in Lahore, Punjab. In October 2005, eight Ahmadis were killed and 20 wounded when religious zealots sprayed bullets at worshippers in an Ahmadiyya mosque at Mong, District Mandi Bahauddin. Later the killers were arrested but a trial court acquitted them.

Both the state and the mulla have also targeted Ahmadiyya mosques. Twenty-four mosques have been demolished, 29 sealed by the authorities, 13 set on fire and 16 have been forcibly occupied since 1984.

Ordinance XX continues to be applied extensively and heedlessly. Violations of Ahmadis' religious freedom are systematic, ongoing and egregious. To date more than three and a half thousand criminal cases have been registered against Ahmadis throughout Pakistan under the provisions of the anti-Ahmadiyya and other religious laws like the Blasphemy laws. In 2012, 56 Ahmadis faced fresh charges. Ahmadis charged under

a blasphemy clause, PPC 295-A, have also been prosecuted in anti-terrorism courts, although it was they who suffered from terrorism at the hand of the state.

Conclusion

While human rights organizations have weighed in heavily on the unlawfulness of Pakistan's Ordinance, unfortunately such organizations have little power to effectuate change. Until the views of the people of Pakistan is not changed, until international pressure is placed by other sovereignties, until the religious extremists which control the executive and judicial decision making is not replaced little change will take place. The need of the hour is to rediscover the original teachings of Islam. The Muslim world must pay heed to the true Islam, the teachings of the Holy Quran and Sunnah as taught by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw), which exemplified religious tolerance and freedom. Paying heed to his call is the only way to rid the Muslim world of terrorism and intolerance.



"I am very much impressed by finding true astronomical facts in the Quran, and for us the modern astronomers have been studying very small pieces of the universe. We've concentrated our efforts for understanding of [a] very small part. Because by using telescopes, we can see only very few parts [of] the sky without thinking [about the] whole universe. So, by reading [the] Quran and by answering to the questions, I think I can find my future way for investigation of the universe."



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CHARLIE HEBDO'S DOUBLE STANDARDS

Atif Munawir Mir

Freedom of speech and expression is a cornerstone of Western democracy. Islam equates freedom of speech and expression with human dignity. This freedom ensures the free flow of ideas in social and political spheres making possible the smooth functioning of democracy.

The credit goes to the Western world for institutionalizing this much needed value in their societies. They made this freedom available to all its citizens without any discrimination. Lately, however, in the Western world freedom of speech and expression is becoming less available to Muslims and other religious groups, particularly in France. It was in France in 2004, where school staff was banned from wearing insignia or garments displaying a religious allegiance. In 2007, these rules were also applied to those delivering a public service. Some Muslim women in France, when forced to choose between the hijab and their jobs, became homemakers. This ban on freedom of religious expression was described as the victory of secularism. The ban on the burqa - whether or not this garment is Islamic is irrelevant - was hailed as a victory of tolerance over oppression. When the cartoon controversy broke out, freedom of speech was invoked to defend the mockery and insult of the Holy Prophet(sa) of Islam.

Are Muslims facing double standards when it comes to freedom of speech and expression in France? Answering on PBS, Bertrand Vanier, a journalist, acknowledged that if he were a Muslim today in France, he would feel that there is definitely a double standard. He points to a French law which prohibits young Muslim women from wearing the burqa in public spaces but authorizes Charlie Hebdo to print religious caricatures.

The purpose of the ban on religious symbols in France, was to push religion out of public space. However, the cartoon controversy suggests that religion is allowed in public space, as long as it is being subjected to mockery and insult. Public insults to religion are not seen as threats to tolerance or secularism. Instead, they are celebrated as embodiments of freedom of speech.

Simply put, it appears that these French laws are not designed to uphold secularism, tolerance or freedom of speech; they simply reflect the growing prejudice against marginal groups, particularly Muslims. The worst part is, that this prejudice has been successfully cloaked in the glorifying language of freedom and secularism.



Owing to its offensive publications, Charlie Hebdo has been painted as an institution that "sets the limits of freedom of speech." Those glorifying the Charlie Hebdo cartoons never question why in 2008, this institution fired French cartoonist Maurice Sinet, who had been working for the publication for 20 years, for mocking the relationship of former French President Sarkozy's son with a wealthy Jewish woman. He was fired for being anti-Semitic. This firing demonstrates a double standard in which Charlie Hebdo champions freedom of expression only when it targets France's marginalized populations.

Such a double standard though pronounced in France is not absent in countries such as the USA. Answering on PBS, Daisy Khan explained that American Muslims do not enjoy free speech. If they criticize their government, they are seen as unpatriotic. If they criticize the policies of Israel or even question them, they are called anti-Semites. And if they call for examining the root causes of terrorism, they are seen as aiding and abetting. So there is a sense that free speech is not for Muslims. That it is only to be enjoyed by Westerners.

Mehdi Hasan zooms in on the growing double standard. He says that no publication would run cartoons mocking the Holocaust or caricatures of the 9/11 victims falling from the twin towers, and rightly so. He goes on to suggest the conducting of a thought experiment offered by the Oxford philosopher Brian Klug. Imagine, Klug writes, if a man had joined the "unity rally" in Paris on 11 January 2015, "wearing a badge that said 'Je suis Chérif'" – the first name of one of the Charlie Hebdo gunmen. Suppose, Klug adds, he carried a placard with a cartoon mocking the murdered journalists. "How would the crowd have reacted?... Would they have seen this lone individual as a hero, standing up for liberty and freedom of speech? Or would they have been profoundly offended?" Do you disagree with Klug's conclusion that the man "would have been lucky to get away with his life"? Freedom of speech must not be selective. Otherwise it smacks of double standards.

Professor John Hacker-Right of the University also puts things in perspective. He writes "Muslims deserve the respect of non-Muslims; we need to mend fences with the vast majority of Muslims who are not carrying out attacks of any sort and just want peace, sovereignty and respect. For that reason we should be cautious in lionizing Charlie Hebdo and be sensitive to what our exercise of freedom of expression means to people interpreting messages against the background of a very different history."

Muslims and the Western world sometimes see the world with different ideological lenses. They must strive to understand each other's perspective through dialogue and discussion. Labelling provocation as satire not only prevents engaging dialogue but is also antithetical to common sense.

Freedom of speech is a hard earned value. Won over a period of centuries and one that we must protect and cherish. Legislations should not be introduced to limit this freedom. However, that does not mean that the civil society should not advocate common sense when exercising this freedom. Freedom of speech that incites hatred and perpetuates prejudice must be discouraged in any civil society. Disagreements must not be swept under the rug, nor overrun with mockery. Instead they should be discussed with decency and respect as dictated by common sense and reason.

The best respect we can offer to victims of the holocaust, of racism and hatred, apart from honouring them, is to not let conditions that led to their downfall take root again in the western world. The conditions that enable prejudices to mutate into irrational fear, hatred and potential violence must be prevented from finding a foothold in the Western world. Instead of allowing the degradation of free speech via insult, injury, and provocation, western countries should protect and cherish it so that this value can continue to inspire such freedom in other countries. Freedom of speech loses its charm and defies its purpose when it is used to loudly and proudly defend wilful insult and offence.

In a multicultural society, the cross cultural exchange of ideas paves the way for tolerance and respect. The benefits of cross cultural encounters are maximized when disagreements and disapprovals are carried out respectfully and decently. Mockery and insult create resentment whereas respectful disagreements increase tolerance and enhance the benefits of freedom of speech.



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SPIRITUAL TREASURES

BOOKS OF THE PROMISED MESSIAH(as)

How to be Free from Sin

Reviewed by Shazia Sohail

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Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad wrote this article to show that the remarkable material progress of the time was accompanied by an equally deplorable decline in spiritual capacities of mankind to recognize truth and detest immorality. This downward force is so great that only a stronger, more powerful force can convince people that there is considerably more satisfaction to be found in fulfillment of God's commandments. Only the Imam of the Age is that heavenly spiritual attraction that can draw mankind away from vice toward piety. The two opposing attractions of good and evil are at their peak and the final battle between them will be ferocious indeed; however, contrary to common belief, this battle will be a spiritual one, not a physical one.

In accordance with scriptural prophecies, once a thousand years (of lunar calendar) had elapsed after Jesus' demise, spiritual decline set in. Islam was born in the period prior to that when, as per every scripture, satan was in shackles. Just as the period of its captivity was a thousand years, so was its period of freedom which ended in the fourteenth century AD. Thus the period of the advent of the Promised Messiah marked the final days of Satan's respite. Another testimony that these are the days of the final spiritual battle between good and evil is that the sixth millennium since the birth of Adam, or the sixth day as per scripture where a day symbolizes a thousand years, is when the second coming of Adam will occur. As per Genesis 2:8 the first Adam appeared in the East, so it stands to reason he will re-appear in the East.

The intense darkness of the forces of materialism could only be dispelled by heavenly light emanating from a holy, pure and resolute soul symbolizing a minaret. Once his truthfulness has been established with sound arguments and his fortitude and steadfastness have become apparent like a minaret, then the period of his trials and tribulations comes to an end and he is imbued with spirituality or heavenly light. This is the meaning of the second coming near a minaret.

The Promised Messiah will appear in two phases. He will initially be rejected and ignorant people will think they are acting piously by subjecting him to intense persecution and slander. The time of his glorious advent will then come when willing hearts will start to see that Divine help is with him and not them. An angel of God will admonish them and they will incline towards the truth. The most powerful paragraph of the article follows:

"It would be a mistake to declare that in this age physical wars should be waged in order to spread faith and piety. The sword, rather than revealing the beauties and excellences of the truth, conceals them and shrouds them in ambiguity. Those who hold such beliefs are foes, not friends, of Islam. They are mean-natured and lack moral fibre, their hearts are cloaked in uncertainty, they are gullible and ignorant, and they provide the opponents of Islam with the opportunity to object that the progress of Islam depends upon the sword. This belief is detrimental to Islam. No religion has to resort to force when it is capable of establishing its truth through rational arguments, undisputed testimonies, and heavenly signs. On the other hand, no further argument is required to falsify a religion which does not possess these qualities and turns to the sword to compensate for its own weakness. Such a religion is in effect slain by its own sword."

The author provides powerful arguments in favor of guarantee of complete freedom of religion in Islam and dispels all notions to the contrary. Early Muslims were forced to fight in self-defense, not to spread Islam.

Due to the edicts of foolish Maulwis, and Christian clerics repeating them to discredit Islam, Muslims started to believe that Islam encourages violent jihad even though the circumstances that necessitated jihad for the early Muslims are not present in this age. The provision that the life of anyone who accepted Islam would be spared has also been misunderstood by many. It was not meant as coercion to convert but as a clemency for those who had deserved to die for their murderous acts in the war they waged against Muslims. God, Who was aware that they had understood the truth of Islam, granted respite to killers out of His grace.

The early Muslims suffered extreme hardship and only fought for security and self-defense. Ignorant Maulawis have given it a barbaric and shameful bent due to lack of regard for human life and eager anticipation for the coming of a Mahdi who, they erroneously believe, will cause much bloodshed to spread Islam. It is due to such murderous views held by Muslims that people of other faiths do not feel secure among them. It is a matter of shame for Muslims that people of other faiths mistrust and hate them on account of their belief that killing a non-Muslim is an act of piety that would earn them Paradise. If Islam is a true religion then its irrefutable arguments and inner excellences are sufficient for its defense and propagation.

Muslims are in dire need of a reformer. They err in their belief as well as practice. They violate the three basic human rights established by Divine law: "One must not kill an innocent person, one must not injure someone's honor, and one must not unjustly appropriate another person's property." Due to edicts issued by egotistic Maulawis, Muslims consider it lawful to kill innocent people, capture women of other faiths, and usurp the property of disbelievers. Such Maulawis are "like wolves in sheep's clothing, deceiving the people, and they are a poison but feign to be a wonderful antidote. They harbor malice towards Islam and God's creatures and their hearts are devoid of compassion and sympathy, but they pretend otherwise. Their sermons are misleading and calculated to serve their own selfish ends. They come into mosques masquerading as holy men whilst concealing their sinful character."

While these people have gone to one extreme, there are others who have gone to the other extreme of denying spiritual blessing altogether. They have abandoned belief in Prophethood, revelation, miracles, prophecies, resurrection or life of the hereafter. They only believe in the relentless pursuit of material gains. Muslims are either on one extreme of the spectrum or the other in their day to day conduct and "lack any sense of moderation in words, actions, morals, marriage, divorce, parsimony, wastefulness, anger, mercy, revenge, or forgiveness."

Muslims usurp the rights of mankind due to their misconceptions about Jihad. Christians, on the other hand, violate the rights of God by taking a mere human to be their God. Their belief that crucifixion of Christ is the only remedy for sin has long been disproved by their continued advancement in immoral acts. It would be wrong to "ascribe to God a death whereby He sacrifices His own life and yet fails to achieve His purpose."

Salvation lies in "true recognition of God through categorical arguments and luminous signs," and is attained when one has developed either perfect fear of, or perfect love for, God. Perfect fear takes root in the heart when one attains absolute certainty that commission of sin will result in punishment. Perfect love is attained when one has beheld the beauty of God and realized that perfect bliss lies only in Him. "All the veils between him and Divine majesty and beauty are thus lifted, and this alone can check egoistical passions and bring about true reformation."

"The water which satiates thirst and quenches the fire of sin is none other than certainty."

"Salvation is not something specific to the Hereafter. True salvation begins in this very life. It is a light that descends upon the soul and reveals the path that leads to destruction. Tread the path of truth and wisdom so that you may be led to God, and strengthen your hearts so that you may move towards the truth."

"If you want to know how you can discard evil, look closely at what your hearts truly desire, and ask your conscience which remedy is the best for getting rid of sin."

"The heart which has been blessed with the knowledge of God and with conviction is like a full-flowing river that irrigates all the fields in its way, and whose cool and clear water brings peace and solace to their burning hearts."



THE REAL MUSLIMS OF PARIS

Lubna R. Malik

Paris. Home to more than 2 million people. A diverse city with strong demographic representations from Algeria, Portugal, Morocco and Tunisia. In addition to diversity of nationality, Paris hosts a range of beliefs, including Secularism, Roman Catholicism, United Protestantism, Islam and Judaism. In the aftermath of 9/11, the Muslims of Paris have often been highlighted for objecting to hijab bans, burqinism and terror plots. In the aftermath of the tragic and unfortunate attacks in France in early January 2015, Muslims were again highlighted—but this time for serving as the hidden heroes. Two of these heroes are Mr. Lassana Bathily and Mr. Ahmed Merabet.

Mr. Lassana Bathily

Mr. Lassana Bathily was born on June 27, 1990 in a village in the Kayes region of western Mali. Mr. Bathily legally immigrated to France on March 10, 2006 and obtained his legal residence permit in 2011. The young 24-year-old Mr. Bathily worked at a Jewish supermarket, Hyper Cacher.



On Friday, January 9, 2015, Mr. Bathily was on duty when a perpetrator, Amedy Coulibaly, began reigning havoc at the market. The perpetrator stormed into the market and shot several shoppers and then began taking hostages. As disorder unfolded, Mr. Bathily immediately began trying to help the shoppers. Mr. Bathily led several shoppers down a spiral staircase and into a cold storage room with him and closed the door, which could only be opened from the inside of the room. After turning off the refrigeration system so no one would freeze to death, Mr. Bathily informed the shoppers to remain quiet because he was going back out to help.

After leaving the cold storage room, Mr. Bathily escaped from the market through an emergency exit, where he was immediately arrested by the police. The police believed he was also a perpetrator. However, after Mr. Bathily began cooperating with the police and explaining the layout of the market and giving the police the keys to the front metal shutter that had been pulled down in front of the market, the police quickly realized that he was on their side. These keys later became integral to the police raising the shutter at the time of their raid into the market and killing the perpetrator.

When interviewed about his heroic efforts that day, Mr. Bathily said:

*"We are brothers.
It's not a question of
Jews, of Christians or of Muslims.
We're all in the same boat.
We have to help each other
to get out of this crisis."*

Mr. Ahmed Merabet

Mr. Ahmed Merabet was born in the northern Paris suburb of Seine-Saint-Denis. His parents immigrated from Algeria and he and his 5 siblings were all born and raised in France. Mr. Merabet was a member of the Paris police force and was assigned to patrol the Paris neighborhood where the magazine Charlie Hebdo was located. Mr. Merabet was about 40 years old.



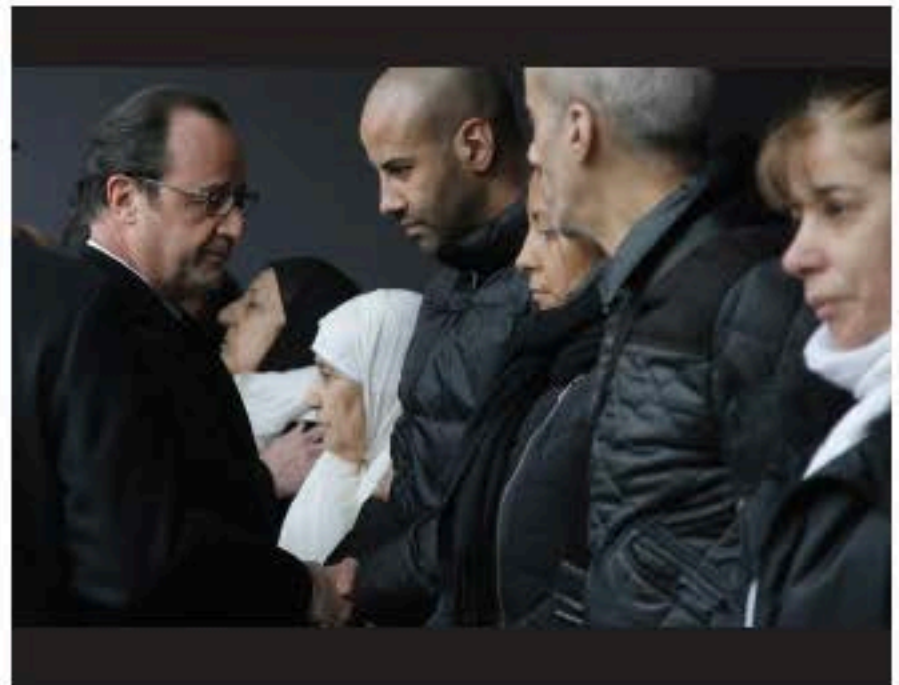
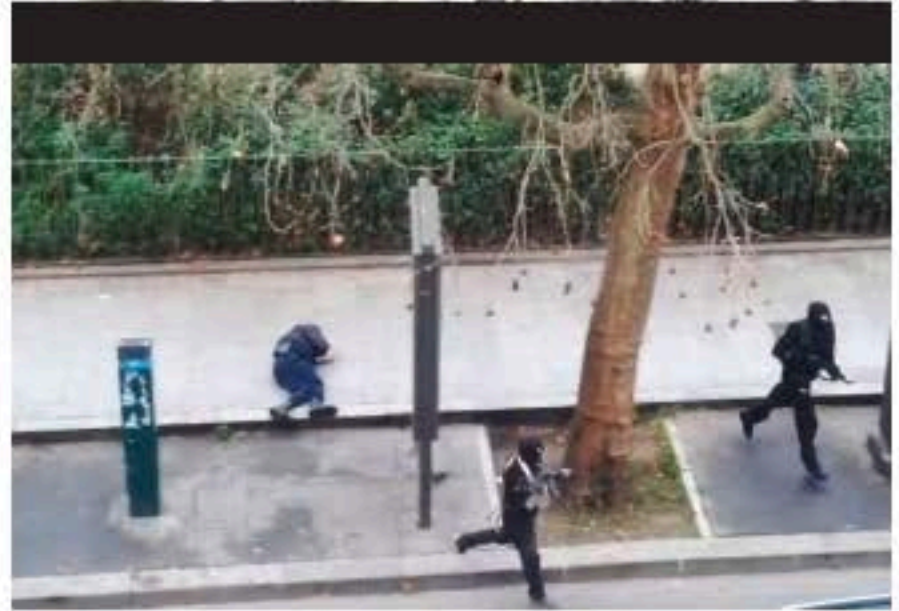
On Wednesday, January 7, 2015, Mr. Merabet was patrolling the streets near the magazine's office—a post he had faithfully served for about eight years. On that Wednesday, however, Mr. Merabet spotted two perpetrators, Said Kouachi and Cherif Kouachi, who were fleeing the magazine's office after having shot and killed several people. Mr. Merabet drew his pistol and fired at the perpetrators' car as they tried to flee the scene. The perpetrators then fired at Mr. Merabet and he fell to the ground injured.

Down and injured, the perpetrators then approached Mr. Merabet and one of them asked him, "You want to kill us?" Mr. Merabet raised his hands in defense and said, "No, it's fine, boss." In response to Mr. Merabet, the perpetrator raised his Kalashnikov and shot Mr. Merabet in the head. The perpetrators then returned to their car and fled the scene.

At the burial of Mr. Merabet, French President, Francois Hollande, spoke of Mr. Merabet and said:

He was very proud to represent the French republic. ... Ahmed Merabet knew better than anyone that radical Islam has nothing to do with Islam and that fanaticism kills Muslims.

These stories of Mr. Bathily and Mr. Merabet represent the true courage and values that Islam emphasizes. May their deaths forever be seen as examples of standing up to injustice.



THE ISSUE OF RIOTING IN RESPONSE TO ATTACKS

Rabia Khan

In one of his Friday sermons, The Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community quotes the Promised Messiah(as) regarding those who riot,

*"Such individuals are not
the well wishers of their own nation
as they create impediments in their path...
those of wicked nature have no skill other than
creating discord and
conflict in a disorderly way...
experience also bears witness that such offen-
sive people meet a sorry end.
The sense of honor of God
ultimately comes to pass
for his loved ones." ①*

This quote is used in light of a crude film made in California called the Innocence of Muslims, depicting the Holy Prophet(sa) in an offensive light. The character of the film maker, when investigated was shown to be foul, he wrote the script for the movie in prison, he lied in order to get it produced; in short, his hypocritical attacks on a beautiful personage were baseless and malign.

In this quote, the Promised Messiah(as) is addressing attacks on Muslims and the Holy Prophet(sa). Clearly, our beloved Messiah does not side with the mischief makers, and declares they are wrong, but his example is the same example as that of the Holy Prophet Muhammad(sa) - to protect the honor of Islam, and not degrade oneself to rioting. This includes not burning down embassies and in the most recent Paris attacks, murdering the creator and staff of the magazine Charlie Hebdo.

However, The Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Mirza Masroor Ahmad(aba) ultimately shows Ahmadi Muslims the right course of action, by the example of Prophet Muhammad(sa) and the Promised Messiah(as). We are told to be prayerful, patient, and steadfast to the honorable and peaceful teachings of Islam. In the same Friday sermon, His Holiness(aba) said, 'Pure discourses do not require extremist measures to be taken nor do they require that vulgarity should be responded to with vulgarity'. We should control our passions and resolve things quickly. I am reminded of a saying of the Holy Prophet Muhammad(sa): The strong is not he who defeats others in wrestling; the strong is he who has full control over himself during his anger.② Currently, Muslims resort to rioting and respond to insults like mere animals. However, there are some who stay true to the teachings of Islam and control themselves.

The Promised Messiah(as) has given us many examples of how to respond to attacks on the honor of Prophet Muhammad(sa) or of Islam. Two such examples I will outline now. The first example is of Abdullah Atham, a Christian who called the Holy Prophet Muhammad(sa) the Dajjal in his book. Dajjal is a term to describe something to fear in the Latter Days that would threaten Christianity. It has been described in religious traditions as a one-eyed Anti-Christ, by misguided Christians as well as Muslims.③ He was engaged in a long debate with the Promised Messiah(as). The Promised Messiah(as) had been praying and since he had been putting the points across that Islam is the word of God, in regards to the debater's degrading comparison of Prophet Muhammad(sa) to the Anti-Christ, he left the decision to God. When he told Abdullah this, he had a most surprising physical and mental reaction. At first a staunch critic of Islam, his state at once became like this, in the words of the Promised Messiah(as),



"When I said these words his face turned pale, he was ashen and his hands began to tremble. He then promptly stuck his tongue out, put his hands to his ears and started shaking his head and his hands in the manner that a frightened criminal vehemently pleads not guilty and comes across most repentant and humble. He kept uttering, again and again, that he had not been disrespectful and impudent, and he did not ever speak against Islam again".⁽⁴⁾

Another example is of Lekh Ram, who also employed abusive language to describe the Holy Prophet Muhammad(sa). The Promised Messiah(as) tried to reason with him, but he just wouldn't desist. On leaving the matter totally to God, the matter in turn resolved. The Promised Messiah(as) prayed to God, and God gave him the assurance that Lekh Ram's baseless claims would come to naught, and ultimately he would die before the Promised Messiah(as) and the revelation was fulfilled as is.⁽⁴⁾

The Second Khalifa or head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hadrat Mirza Bashir-ud-din Mahmud Ahmad(ra), also gave a step by step process to deal with abusers. He outlined to Ahmadi Muslims that we should firstly reform ourselves, secondly we should be fully immersed in conveying the message of Islam, and thirdly, we should try to save the Muslims from economic and social subjugation.⁽⁵⁾ Assuredly, the fifth Khalifa Hadrat Mirza Masroor Ahmed(aba), is guiding us on this path in these very three ways when a life event hits the Muslim world.

I would now like to outline the press release from Hadrat Mirza Masroor Ahmed(aba) on the killings of Charlie Hebdo and its staff. At this point, it is important to remember that as well as stunning the whole world, it put an extra hurt on the peaceful Muslims due to the so-called Muslims who carry out attacks in the name of religion, and are tainting our faith. When any such heinous act happens, the practice of the Ahmadiyya Community is always the same; we condemn all horrific acts against humanity. In the press release the Khalifah said that Muslims should not take to the streets to protest but to offer sincere prayers for the Holy Prophet(sa). He says that although these acts should be condemned they are completely against the teachings of Islam, and cannot be justified through Islamic teachings. He further states the influence of media on the world stage. He talked of how the media has influence and power because it can increase disorder and unnecessarily provoke, or it can promote peace and harmony. Therefore he called on the media to fulfill its task with responsibility. Hadrat Mirza Masroor Ahmed(aba) in the aftermath of the Paris attacks, acted completely in accordance with the Khalifas or Caliphs, before him and in line with the Holy Prophet Muhammad's(sa) teachings.

In his 2011 sermon, addressing Muslims about rebellion he had said that those who hold violent demonstrations against their governments and cause damage to property and engage in riots are acting against the Shariah. In no protest, whether it is against the media, or the government for being unjust, are Muslims free to act with violence and cause mayhem.



In his 2012 sermon, regarding the 2006 aftermath of the Danish caricatures the Prophet(sa), His Holiness warned of the attacks worsening and slander increasing. As always, he counseled the Muslims that whether they protested or not, the perpetrators would not stop at one cartoon. He also mentioned some politicians who in the name of freedom of speech, indirectly support their actions. If injustice is not openly condemned, this is also a path to disorder. And clearly it was, as we saw in 2012 came the production of the vulgar film, a continuation of slander on Islam, and then 2015 brought the Charlie Hebdo cartoons in a magazine whose circulation was dwindling from lack of interest. However, as counseled, the Ahmadiyya Community did not raise a weapon, just our voices through responsible action via media outlets. His Holiness(aba) stated about the movie and the cartoons,

***"The vulgarities and obscenities
they perpetrate today will
in fact harm
their own nations,
for such people are selfish and unjust.
Apart from merely
fulfilling their own desires,
they are not
interested in
anything else".***

Sadly, as I write the conclusion to this article it seems the extremists in this world are not taking heed. On February 14th 2015 a gunman attacked a free speech conference in Copenhagen killing one man, with his target Lars Viks, a Swedish cartoonist, unharmed. The gunman is subject to a manhunt and unidentified at this time. We will watch the story unfold but for now this problem keeps playing on the world stage. His Holiness(aba) says, quite prophetically in the 2012 sermon, that the lack of leadership in the Muslim world, and equally the mischief makers in the West cause this terrifying problem to exacerbate dangerously. Double standards amongst politicians are damaging. Some clear- minded leaders do profess that faith should not be attacked, however under the banner of free speech they do nothing to condemn inflammatory cartoons or other media. And the central role of Muslims in this scenario is to come together and show the true image of Islam and present the true character of Prophet Muhammad(sa) to the world; which is what the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is doing under the leadership of the Khalifa, His Holiness Mirza Masroor Ahmed(aba). What the world also needs to be reminded is that there are mischief makers in every group/race/religion. Therefore nobody's faith should be singled out and maligned against.



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ISLAM **VS.** MUSLIMS ON BLASPHEMY

Mansoor Qureshi

Two individuals were walking on the streets. They lived around 1500 years apart. Devotees to Prophet Muhammad(sa) were enraged by the words and actions of these individuals. Both were being considered guilty of blasphemy against the Holy Prophet(sa) of Islam. One of them was murdered and the other was forgiven. Blasphemy, its meaning, extent, reasons, responses or lack thereof is a viral topic these days. It is important to distinguish between the true Islamic teachings on this issue as opposed to what is being presented by some Muslims of today.

Blasphemy is defined as: "the act of insulting or showing contempt or lack of reverence for God or toward something considered sacred or inviolable." (Merriam-Webster dictionary) The Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet(sa) are very clear on this issue. Allah the Almighty recommends creating an atmosphere of mutual respect and tolerance.

And revile not those whom they call upon beside Allah, lest they, out of spite, revile Allah in their ignorance. (Ch.6: V.109) If people apply this rule in their interpersonal dealings, blasphemy and all related issues will cease to exist.

The Holy Prophet(sa) acted in accordance to the purport of this verse and entered into peaceful treaties with the Jews of Medina. They were free to practice their faith and even had their own school of learning: Bait-ul-Madaris. Similarly, the Prophet(sa) allowed the Christians of Najran to pray in his mosque without any hesitation and made a covenant with the Christians of Saint Catherine Monastery and gave them protection.

Some Muslims react violently to words and acts of blasphemy against the Holy Prophet(sa). It is their belief that love for the Holy Prophet(sa) sometimes demands extreme actions including murder.

There is not a single verse, not a single tradition or action of the Holy Prophet(sa) that supports physical punishment for any acts of blasphemy. Allah the Almighty, did not allow the Prophet(sa) to prescribe any physical punishment to those who were blasphemous towards him.

Some Muslim scholars have put their false ideologies into laws. Take, for example, The Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Here is what the Pakistan constitution says:

Section 295 C of Pakistan Penal code

'Use of derogatory remarks etc. in respect of the Holy Prophet [saw]: Whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representation, or by any imputation, innuendo, or insinuation, directly or indirectly, defiles the sacred name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) shall be punished with death.



Before debunking the arguments used by proponents of such laws, it is important to understand the levels of evidence and jurisdiction in Islam.

The foremost is the word of Allah as recorded in the Holy Qur'an. This will be the final and overriding authority in a matter where there is a difference in opinion, followed by the words and actions of the Holy Prophet(sa) of Islam. If any tradition or action of the Prophet(sa) appears contrary to clear Qur'anic injunctions, it either did not happen or must have not been transmitted to us correctly. Prophet Muhammad(sa) has cautioned us, "Whenever a Hadith is presented to you in my name, verify it with the Qur'an. If it agrees with the Qur'an, accept it, and if it is in conflict, discard it." (Al Tibiyan wat Tabayyen, vol. 2, 28)

Those who favor physical punishment for blasphemy quote a few verses out of context to support their false notion. For example:

The reward of those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and strive to create disorder in the land is only this that they be slain or crucified or their hands and their feet be cut off on alternate sides, or they be expelled from the land. That shall be a disgrace for them in this world, and in the Hereafter they shall have a great punishment; except those who repent before you have them in your power. So know that Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful. (5:34-35)

This verse addresses "waging war against Allah and His Messenger." It also mentions "creating disorder in the land." There is no mention of blasphemy. Despite the actions mentioned, the next verse still gives a clear opportunity of reformation and repentance. This is contrary to the belief of some, that there is no chance of repentance and forgiveness for one who is guilty of blasphemy.

One argument is that the act of blasphemy makes one an apostate and thus worthy of murder. However, there is no verse in the Holy Qur'an, which prescribes death for an apostate. Here is one of the verses on this issue:

***O ye who believe!
Whoso among you turns
back from his religion,
then let it be known that in his
stead Allah will soon bring a people
whom He will love and who will love Him,
and who will be kind
and humble towards believers,
hard and firm against disbelievers.
(5:55)***

No mention of death penalty for those who turn back from their religion.

Occasional incidents are quoted from the history of Islam where individuals were apparently killed for blasphemy. If we perform a deeper study of the circumstances around their death, we find that not only had they used foul language against the Prophet(sa), but they also did their best to create disorder, instigate violence, attempt murder, commit murder, commit treason, or break treaties. Ka'ab bin Ashraf, Abu Rafay, and Ibne Khatl are examples.

The true Islamic response to acts of disrespect has been clarified for us, by the reformer of the age, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian-The Promised Messiah and Mahdi(as).

First off, no discussion of disrespect can be complete without mention of the most respected. If one feels strongly about blasphemy of the Holy Prophet(sa), one has to feel even stronger about the blasphemy against Allah the Almighty. The Holy Qur'an says:

No knowledge have they thereof, nor had their fathers. Grievous is the word that comes from their mouths. They speak naught but a lie (18:6)

Allah the Almighty describes the Blasphemy against Him by those who attribute a son to him. He calls it a "grievous" word. Despite such an extreme disgrace, no physical punishment is mentioned.

There are several verses in the Holy Qur'an mentioning derogatory comments and remarks made by the Prophet's (sa) opponents. Allah the Almighty did not mention, nor did the Holy Prophet(sa) suggest any violent responses to such comments. He was called "a madman" (Ch.15: 7) and that "there is madness in him," (Ch.23: 71) he was "a victim of deception" (Ch.17: 48) and a liar. Furthermore, he was labeled a "poet" and "a fabricator." (Ch.16: 102)

The life of the Holy Prophet(sa) is filled with several instances where he was both verbally and physically abused. Never once did he order any physical punishment or allow his followers to act in that way.

One such instance has been quoted in the Holy Qur'an, when Abdullah bin Ubay bin Salool called the Prophet(sa) the most mean.

They say, 'If we return to Medina, the one most honorable will surely drive out therefrom the one most mean' (63:9)

The verse does not challenge Muslims to attack and kill him. The Prophet(sa) himself forgave Abdullah bin Salool.

The story of the city of Taif is a categorical example. The Prophet(sa) was chased in the streets and rocks were thrown at him. He was disgraced and humiliated. The Prophet(sa) himself called it the worst day of his life. Blasphemy was at its highest. This was a time for a physical punishment, if ever it was allowed. When the angel asked permission of him to destroy the whole city, the Prophet(sa) of Allah begged for forgiveness for the people of the city.

One may argue that the Prophet(sa) was helpless and powerless and thus could not punish. However, Allah the Almighty did give him the position of strength and power. He could have punished all those individuals guilty of disgrace at the time of the fall of Mecca. Instead, he forgave all and proved he was a mercy for mankind.

Muslims have been forewarned about acts of blasphemy, and have been asked to practice patience and steadfastness.

You shall surely be tried in your possessions and in your persons and you shall surely hear many hurtful things from those who were given the Book before you and from those who set up equals to God. But if you show fortitude and act righteously, that indeed is a matter of strong determination. (3:187)

They have been asked to act wisely, and with compassion. They have been asked to leave from situations where such comments are being made or discussions are being held.

And He has already revealed to you in the Book that, when you hear the Signs of Allah being denied and mocked at, sit not with them until they engage in a talk other than that; for in that case you would be like them. (4:141)

Again, there is no mention of any physical punishment or revenge.

If we were to follow the recommendations of these misguided Muslim scholars, then there will be no one left to practice faith, and everyone will be allowed to murder followers of other faiths for the crime of blasphemy. As based on Qur'anic testimony, all Prophets were disrespected:

Then We sent Our Messengers one after another. Every time there came to a people their Messenger, they treated him as a liar... (23:45)

All Muslims want the world to respect and love the Holy Prophet(sa) of Islam. Can they force this love by committing acts of murder? People loved the Prophet(sa) due to his merciful loving nature.

And it is by the great mercy of Allah that thou art kind towards them, and if thou hadst been rough and hard-hearted, they would surely have dispersed from around thee. So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them... (3:160)

The Khalifah of Islam, Mirza Masroor Ahmad(aba) said in his Friday Sermon:

"A true Muslim, therefore, along with invoking Durud (sending salutations upon the Holy Prophet (saw)), should strive to follow the example set by the Holy Prophet (saw). He should obey all the injunctions given by God, and endeavor to lead every moment of his life in the way the Prophet (saw) did. When a Muslim adopts this approach, his Durud will emanate from his heart, and he will become a paragon of virtue and high moral standards. This is how the honor of the Holy Prophet (saw) can truly be upheld, rather than by holding rallies and burning tires etc.. To silence others, a Muslim follows the example of the Prophet (saw), and thereby does not give an opportunity for anyone to raise objections against Islam or hurl abuse against it. Instead, his excellent behavior would lead people, even the opponents of Islam, to stand up and take notice, and praise the teachings of Islam and the person of the Holy Prophet (saw) for inspiring such excellent conduct." (January 21, 2011)

Going back to the two individuals who had offended the feelings of Muslims. One was Abdullah bin Ubay bin Salool, and the other was ex Governor of Punjab, Salman Taseer. The one who was forgiven for blasphemy was in the presence of the Holy Prophet(sa), while the other was murdered based on the teachings of Muslim leaders of today.

The question is, whose Islam do we want to follow, the Islam of the Holy Prophet(sa), or that of the "scholars" of today?



THE ROOT OF ANTI-ISLAMIC RHETORIC IN AMERICA

Naveed Ahmed Malik

Long before the birth of the United States of America, priest and politician alike disparaged Islam. American colonies adopted the anti-Islamic rhetoric of their Christian forebears in Europe, who by the 14th century had begun to clash with the fast-encroaching Ottomans. Terms like “Turk” (a subject of the Ottoman sultan) and “Mohammedan” (a moniker for Muslim) became synonymous—even to this day, Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary defines “Turk” as “Muslim.”

German Protestant reformer Martin Luther (1483–1546), for example, wrote, “The person of the Antichrist is at the same time the pope and the Turk.”

The actions of the Ottoman were imputed to Islam, often in an effort to inspire the devout Christian to again crusade against Europe’s arch political nemesis.

In this article I argue that criticism of Islam became popular in America due to political reasons; i.e., the Ottoman Empire’s expansion into Eastern Europe. (Granted, Europe’s Crusades of the 12th and 13th centuries CE popularized defamation of Islam long before the Ottoman empire, but since they long predate the colonization and founding of the U.S., they are ignored here; even then, as that conflict was also political, my argument would hold.)



In 1453, the Ottomans conquered Constantinople and less than 100 years later they would defeat the Hungarians and besiege Vienna. Islamic scholar Denise Spellberg contextualizes this campaign thusly:

“Although that first siege [of Vienna] failed, European fears of Muslim military might would persist throughout the seventeenth century, until 1683, when the Ottomans would attempt to seize the Austrian capital a second and final time. Though this attack would also fail, and by 1700 the Ottoman menace would recede, the memory of the Turkish military conquests remained a potent symbol in Christian thought into the eighteenth century”.

My purpose is to show readers that priests and politicians defined Islam by the actions of certain Muslims, as well as governments that identified themselves as Islamic, but that this is not necessarily an accurate portrait of the religion of Islam. What if these particular individuals or governments did not practice true Islamic teachings—which was almost always the case?



Today, if Islam is defined by the actions of ISIS, how is this any different from defining Christianity yesterday by the actions of the Inquisitors who forcibly converted Muslims and Jews into Christianity—or simply slaughtered them alongside Christians who weren't deemed the right kind of Christian. Indeed, President Barack Obama made a similar admonition this past February at the 2015 National Prayer Breakfast:

"And lest we get on our high horse and think this [religious extremism] is unique to some other place, remember that during the Crusades and the Inquisition, people committed terrible deeds in the name of Christ. In our home country, slavery and Jim Crow all too often was justified in the name of Christ."

European Roots of anti-Islamism

In Thomas Jefferson's *Qur'an*, Spellberg shows how Protestants routinely reviled Islam alongside Catholicism, often in the same breath, portraying each as a dangerous political doctrine only masquerading as religion. To America's Protestants, the Catholic pope and the Ottoman sultan were equally vexing. (Spellberg also reveals the reverence with which many founding fathers regarded Islam, and how they imagined a place for Muslims as citizens in the fledgling nation.) She writes:

"John Calvin (1509–1564), the sixteenth-century French Protestant reformer, was another theologian whose views on Islam directly influenced American Protestants. Like Luther, he identified the Antichrist in Islamic terms [...] Calvinist theology was by far the most influential on Protestants in North America. And so the majority of early Americans, regardless of their Protestant denomination, would adopt Calvin's idea about Islam and the Antichrist as theological truth."



John Calvin (1509–1564)



John Foxe (1516–1587)

In England, Protestant writer John Foxe (1516–1587) published a book ostensibly on Islam, but which was actually focused on the "unspeakable cruelty and slaughter of Turkish tyrants upon poor Christian men's bodies". Foxe exaggerated accounts of Ottoman abuse, but accurately described their (anti-Islamic) practice of conscripting young Christian boys into an elite force called the Janissaries.

Early American Rhetoric

European evangelical preachers like George Whitefield (1714–1770) made numerous trips across the Atlantic, and cemented uncontested anti-Islamic views in the colonies. Religious leaders in the colonies, such as "the Puritan leader Cotton Mather (1663–1728) and the banished Anne Hutchinson (d. 1643) would both condemn Islam, invoking the familiar image of the Ottoman Antichrist's head merged with that of the pope and 'Mahomet'". Many preachers invoked anti-Islamic rhetoric to disparage rival Christian sects.

Rev. John Alexander Dowie (1847–1907), a Protestant faith healer and Pentecostal forerunner—best remembered for his role in a prayer duel with His Holiness Mirza Ghulam Ahmad(as)—employed the oft-used tactic of complimenting Muslims as a way of insulting Catholics. On one occasion Dowie stated:



Rev. John Alexander Dowie (1847–1907)

*"I would rather be
an honest Mohammedan
than an idolater who
would worship the Mass,
and kiss the Pope's toe,
and believe that
that wretched old
Monk at Rome was infallible!"*

But even by the early 20th century, Americans still understood Islam in the Ottoman context. Dowie, for example, would also declare, "You men know, as well as I do, that events in the Far East portend the early breaking up of the Turkish Empire and the destruction of the religion of the False Prophet with the ruin of that Mohammedan power, and God hasten it."

Who's to Blame?

Is any of this anti-Islamic rhetoric justified? Yes and no; no in that true Islam itself is a perfect and peaceful teaching that deserves no blame for the failings of its adherents; yes in that Muslim rulers and clerics have long twisted Islamic teachings—much like their Christian counterparts with the Gospel, as mentioned by President Obama earlier—to suit their own ends. Thus have they allowed the west to knowingly, or unknowingly, conflate anti-Islamic acts by Muslims with the pristine teachings of Islam that, ironically, forbid such acts.

Rulers of Muslim-majority countries were guilty, like violent extremists and the clerics who support them today, of couching politically motivated violence as holy Jihad. They did this to motivate the people, who love their faith, to fight their political or religious enemies. Within Islam, Sunnis were pitted against Shi'a, and without, Muslims against Christians. The common refrain of "Islam was spread by the sword" is categorically false in early Islam, but when misapplied to Turkish expansionism, explains how politics was given a religious flavor—by both sides. The Turks called upon subjects to be good Muslims and engage in "jihad"—a false jihad, to be sure—and the Christians of the west took advantage of this misstep by the Ottomans to (a) criticize Islam as violent, and (b) use religion as a motivator to launch their own politically motivated violence.

Even today, the Taliban's massacre of more than 130 Muslim schoolchildren in Pakistan or ISIS's burning alive a Jordanian Muslim pilot are well-known tragedies carried out in the name of Islam. As a result, many people know only the so-called "Islam" practiced by misguided Muslims who have lost the true meaning of the faith.

Modern critics of Islam, most of whom are motivated not by religion but profit—the likes of Robert Spencer, Pam Geller, and Daniel Pipes—have only a superficial view of Islam, inherited from the Dowies and Mathers of yesteryear, who took their cues from Calvin, Luther, and Voltaire. This chain of ignorance can only be broken through an open-minded study of the true teachings of Islam.

Rhetoric vs. Reality: Defining Islam

The reader may naturally ask, if I choose to reject traditional anti-Islamic rhetoric, then how should I define Islam, if not by the Ottomans, the Taliban, or ISIS?

The answer is that the true meaning of Islam is preserved in the Holy Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet Muhammad(sa), and, in this age, the teachings of the Promised Messiah, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad(as) of Qadian. God Almighty raised the Promised Messiah as the Imam Mahdi, or Guided Leader, to reform the Muslims.

Through Jihad of the pen, the Promised Messiah(as) refuted attempts by clerics and Muslim leaders to couch political or sectarian violence as Islamic Jihad. He corrected countless errors prevalent in Islamic thought, much like Jesus(as) did with the Law of Moses(as). His life reflected the teachings of the Perfect Man, the Holy Prophet Muhammad(sa), and today, his community is led by his fifth successor, Mirza Masroor Ahmad(aba).

Indeed Jesus(as) taught that a tree is judged by its fruit. So if people wish to judge Islam by a group of people, let them look to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, which, with its motto of "love for all, hatred for none," is spreading true Islam the world over.



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BLASPHEMY **LAW:** INTENT & IMPLICATIONS

Rabia Munawar Mir

Blasphemy is the degradation of the sacred. Blasphemy law involves the prohibition and punishment of blasphemy. The purpose of such a law is to facilitate social cohesion through the enforcement of mutual respect. Needless to say, such laws have come under a lot of scrutiny in the recent past. A great deal of controversy surrounds the discussion of their implementation in the West. Those who favour them cite the need for legal sanction against those who insult the religious sentiments of others. Those who condemn them cite their misuse and their underlying principle of limiting expression as an attack on free speech.

This article will discuss the notion of a blasphemy law from a legal perspective. It will then go on to discuss specifically, its impact on ideological relations and generally, its impact upon a pluralistic society. Finally, the article will look to Islamic teachings to understand the Islamic viewpoint on blasphemy.

When people cry out for a blasphemy law, what precisely are they asking for? It is simple to demand a blanket prohibition upon a certain type of expression. But the law does neither care for blanket statements nor for generics. The law requires specifics. If a blasphemy law were to be introduced, what exactly would be considered blasphemy? Precisely, what would be the parameters of such a law?

For example, would bans on religious insult prohibit images specifically? All images or only derogatory images? It is safe to say that Muslims would be united in their condemnation of derogatory images of the Prophet Muhammad (saw). But what about positive images? Many Muslims would argue that there is an Islamic prohibition on making images of the Prophet (sa). Yet there are Muslims who may consider a positive image an expression of love and fidelity. Such Muslims may be far and few in between, but considering the diversity within Islam, the existence of such a minority is not difficult to fathom. Consider, for example, that in Malaysia, Prophet Muhammad (sa) key chains are sold as souvenirs. Or that Prophet Muhammad (sa) postcards were sold in Algeria between the 1920's-30's.

Iranian painters, as early as the 14th century, were depicting the Prophet in cultural art—in commemoration of him.

Also consider that Wahabists (practitioners of the Wahabi strain of Islam, emerging from Saudi Arabia and now spreading worldwide) would consider these depictions no small crime. As far as the example of images are concerned, whose version of Islam would be adhered to in establishing a blasphemy law? The majority who condemns any such imagery or the minority who may condone positive imagery?

Democracy, of course, stipulates the rule of the majority. But as far as legalizing religious viewpoints goes, the rule of the majority is a highly dangerous prospect. Steven Wheatley, author of *Democracy, Minorities and International Law*, argues that “democratic governments cannot seek to respond to the fact of cultural conflict by concluding bargains with the putative representatives of ethno-cultural minorities.” Wheatley reasons that such an approach fails to acknowledge differing opinions within any given group. Today the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is demanding a global ban on insults to the Prophet Muhammad (sa). This may seem like a simple enough and noble gesture from afar. Up close, it poses some serious problems. States that agree to such a ban would have to define “insult.” If “insult” comes to be defined by the Muslim majority viewpoint, it is hardly a stretch of the imagination to consider that tomorrow, the OIC will insist that the Ahmadiyya viewpoint, of the arrival of a Prophet after the Prophet Muhammad (sa) is an insult to his dignity.

Both religious freedom and its sister freedom, freedom from persecution, is a fundamental cornerstone of democracy. As such, Scholar A. James Reichley argues that it is the state's responsibility to accommodate all religions. The state must not endorse any one religion as all religions are “to some extent rivals.” For example, Christians may feel insulted that Muslims deny the Divinity of Christ. They may argue that Muslim dogma poses an insult to the dignity of their Savior. Consider that Muslims may find Hindu depictions of Divinity an insult to God Himself and Hindus may find the Islamic ban on images of the Divine, an attempt to diminish and debase their faith, which relies heavily on visual renditions of God. It is the state's responsibility to ensure the accommodation of each and every religion, under the security and sanction of the state itself. But how is the state meant to do this when there are competing viewpoints within and between religions?

The state does this by fostering a strong civil society. It fosters such a society by way of several methods. One of the primary ones being the establishment and promotion of free speech. Many Muslims today are arguing for limitations on free speech. They believe that such limitations will enforce mutual respect. But the question arises, how are such limitations to be imposed? By way of fines? Imprisonment? Boycotting? Or a beloved amongst fanatics, murder? Limitations on free speech are not only difficult to impose, they pose a threat to the institution of religion itself. Hadrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad(ra) writes in his book *Islam's Response to Contemporary Issues* that "freedom of speech and expression is vital to the spread of a Message." He cites the Holy Qur'an to explicate his point: "Or have you a clear authority? Then provide your Book if you are truthful"(37:157-158) The Qur'an insists upon exchange of viewpoints and information in order to establish dialogue and discussion between differing and often disagreeing belief systems.

Bans on speech and literature are in contradiction to the Islamic stance on freedom of speech and expression. Without these freedoms, missionaries would be rendered useless, their purpose meaningless and the Message of God itself would, in effect, become futile. Islam commands freedom of speech because this is a necessary precondition for missionary work. Further, Islam does not impose a punishment upon those who desecrate Islamic dogma. In fact, Islam demands of its adherents a humble and respectful attitude even before those who are arrogant towards and disrespectful of Islam. The reason being that Islam, above all, values social harmony, social dialogue and ultimately social justice. So much so that Muslims are commanded that even if they should have to bear insults on account of their religion, they should do so with the utmost decency.

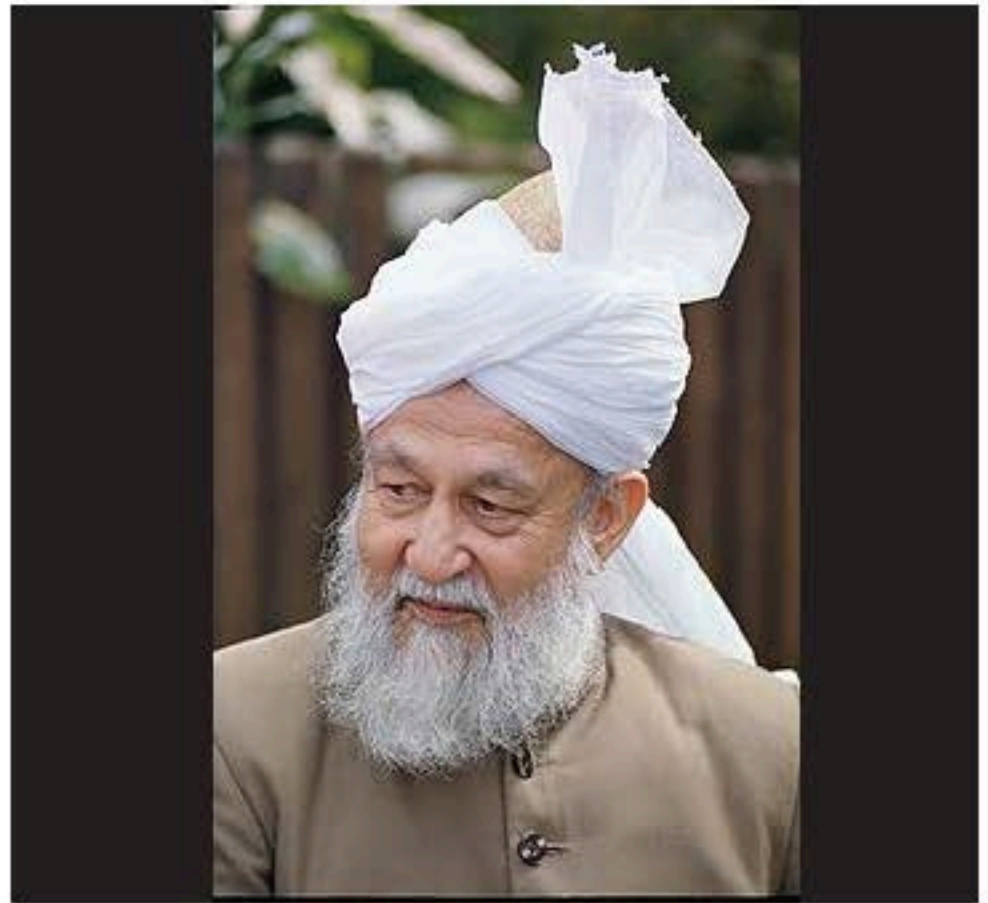
The Holy Qur'an states:

"And when thou seest those who engage in vain discourse concerning our signs, then turn thou away from them until they engage in a discourse other than that"(6:69).

The Holy Qur'an further states:

"And those who are righteous are not at all accountable for them, but their duty is to admonish them that they may fear Allah"(6:70).

Muslims are taught that should others engage in indecent talk about Islam, it is best to walk away from them and engage in conversation with them only when they desist such efforts. Further, they are taught that their duty is only to admonish such people, they are not the keepers of such people. As such, they are not entitled to punish their misdemeanors. In the latter verse, notice the emphasis on the word "Allah." The emphasis indicates that there is to be no worldly punishment for blasphemy.



Hadrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad(ra) goes on to say

"Blasphemy is condemned on moral and ethical grounds, no doubt, but no physical punishment is prescribed for blasphemy in Islam despite the commonly held view in the contemporary world."... "Islam does not advocate the punishment of blasphemy in this world nor vests such authority in anyone."



Islam's response to blasphemy is admonishment. But Islam also encourages preventive measures to blasphemy. It encourages dialogue, debate, discussion. Respectful interaction, decent conduct and refined intellectual arguments are the hallmark of any discussion within Islam, especially in reference to religious matters. Free speech is an opportunity that must be availed of to the utmost in order to curtail the efforts of those who see it as a right to insult and inflame. But the best way to do this is to interact with those in one's imminent vicinity.

When asked why there is such a difference of perspective on Islam between the U.K. and the U.S., with U.K. being cited as the better of the two, religions scholar Reza Aslan argued that much of this difference has to do with how many people actually know Muslims. He states only 1% of Americans are Muslim and less than 40% of Americans "claim to have ever met a Muslim." Pervasive one-on-one interaction can do wonders for shaping perceptions and addressing misconceptions.

Rather than vying for blasphemy laws, Muslims should be making efforts to serve their local communities in their respective countries so that they might garner respect at the grass-roots level. In this way, blasphemy can be addressed not by way of legal sanction but by way of winning hearts.

Should blasphemy be discouraged? Absolutely. Is freedom of speech being misused? Absolutely. Was it intended to be used to inflame? Absolutely not. Freedom of speech was intended to facilitate open dialogue and debate. It was intended to stimulate social growth and evolution via the open exchange of ideas. It is being misused. But blasphemy laws are not the answer.

Limitations on free speech are necessary and conducive to social harmony and well-being. But legally sanctioned limitations are extremely dangerous. Just as faith cannot be compelled, respect cannot be enforced. Islam advises its followers to act with decency even when being addressed rudely and to avail any and every opportunity to spread the true message of Islam. What better way to spread the beauty of Islam than by way of noble conduct in the face of insult and injury. Adversity does not build character, it reveals character. Blasphemy poses an extremely painful but profound opportunity to reshape the public narrative within which Islam has been thrust. This narrative must be deconstructed and reconstructed with care and intellect. Not with a lawful fist.



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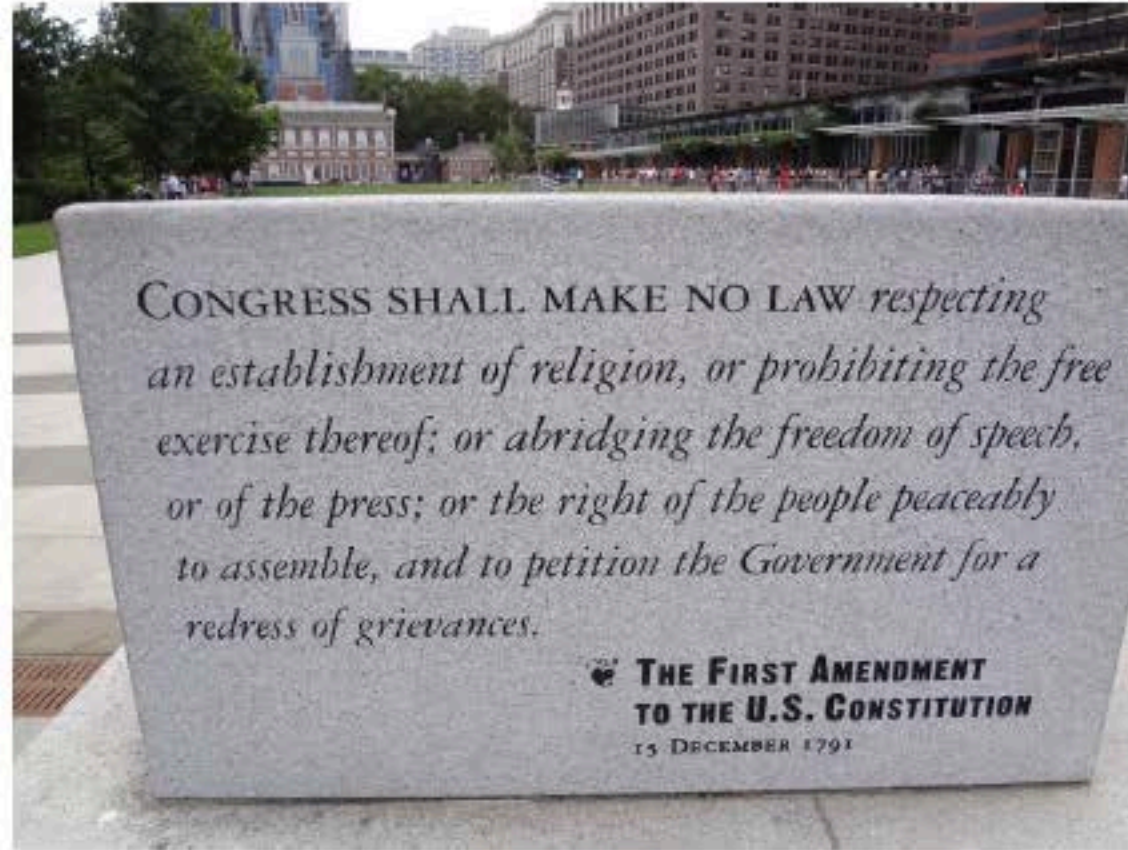
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SETTING LIMITS ON FREE SPEECH

Sehr Mujeeb Chowdhry

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

**United States Constitution,
First Amendment**



The right of expression shouldn't be used to stir negativity among any people. It is Satan that thrives on hatred and the spreading of disorder, for he desires chaotic rein in the hearts of men. Naturally if one gestures hostility towards another, whether it be verbal or physical, the conventional response would likely be just as hostile or more. As Pope Francis sums up to a group of journalists after the Charlie Hebdo incident:

"I believe you cannot react violently, but if Mr. Gasparri, my great friend, says a curse a word against my mother he can expect a punch, this is normal. This is normal. You cannot provoke, you cannot insult other people's faiths, you cannot make fun of faith... Many people who speak badly about other religions, or religion, who make fun of them, make other people's religions a joke, well, that is a provocation. And then things can happen, like if Mr. Gasparri had insulted my mother. There is a limit, every religion that has dignity, every religion that respects people... What happened [in Paris] we find incredible, but let's look at our own history. How many wars of religion have we had?... This person gives their life, but they give it in a bad way. Many people who work, and I think of missionaries for example, they give their life but to construct. These people give their lives, killing themselves and destroying. There is something here that is not right."

The USA constitution provide equal rights to all including the freedom of speech. The freedom to express ourselves however, has been taken for granted and misused. Some believe they can say whatever they want and get away with it. There is nothing wrong with expressing oneself, but there should be limits to how and what is expressed... Look at the story of *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*. In a nutshell, a boy looking after sheep yells wolf because he's bored and wants to have a little fun by playing a practical joke. Every time he cries wolf the villagers would rush to his aid only to find nothing is wrong. Obviously they get annoyed every time because of having to drop everything only to help a boy who ends up lying. That boy could easily argue free speech and being his right to express himself as he pleases. However all words and actions have consequences, as this rascal discovers when a real wolf shows up..Even Pope Francis has stated that freedom of speech has limits.

Islam's stance on this subject is to speak what is positive, and to guard the feelings of others. The Holy Qur'an states:

"And say to My servants that they should speak which is best. Surely, Satan stirs up discord among them. Surely, Satan is an open enemy to man" (17:54).

Even the Pope recognizes that the way in which one conducts themselves, the way in which one sacrifices their lives, there is a good way to do it and there is a bad way. One may claim that their acts are for the greater good but human logic tends to weigh in as the voice of reason. Religions deserve respect and civility towards them, anyone who goes against this is inviting enmity and ill will. If we forsake kindness for one another where will that leave us? The Promised Messiah(as) says:

'He who abandons kindness abandons religion. The Holy Qur'an teaches that whosoever kills a person without justifiable cause will be as if he has killed the whole world. In the same way, I say that if someone is not kind unto his brother, it is like he has been unkind to the whole world.'

So we can't express our opinions because it may be taken as hate? What's the difference between hate speech and opinion? This country allows us to speak freely yet law will intervene when anything threatens the peace and sanctity of the country. The law recognizes hate speech as causing threat or insult to any group based on race, color, religion, or any other trait, therefore it is forbidden. An opinion is a view or judgement one may possess, and of course everyone is entitled to think however they wish. Hate speech is an excessive form of opinion that can result in chaos. How you react with your opinions forms the outcome, therefore we ought to have more self control. In his sermon about anger management, Hadrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad(aba) has quoted the Promised Messiah(as) stating that excessive anger causes a lack of faith. The beauty of Islam lies in holding back anger and opting more on forgiveness. It is carrying high morals that will get you far, Islam doesn't approve of reckless behavior, therefore, you should hold back your negative opinions. Our Promised Messiah(as) also reminds that even if we are in the right then we must humble ourselves as though we are the liars. There are those who attempt to play the victim and pretend to be truthful when they are the ones that are the liars. These people can't grasp the value of faith, because faith demands that once we have a hold of our senses we ought to correct any wrong or emotional hurt done to another, and remedy the situation.



Free speech has its limits and consequences, you can't yell fire in a theatre when there is none and expect everything to be alright afterwards. The USA law allows free speech. However, the United States Supreme Court established a standard called Imminent Lawless Action test, which defines the limits of free speech. It was formed due to the 1969 case of *Brandenburg v. Ohio*. According to the test the First Amendment can impede free speech if it follows two principles. Firstly, that the speech is appealing for imminent lawless action, and secondly, that it is likely to result in that action.

Islam though, attacks the root of the problem and asks that we not harbor ill will in our hearts, for everyone's peace and for our own. Our Holy Prophet Muhammad(sa) had endured a lifetime of hardship, yet he never let his emotions get the better of him for the sake of Allah's pleasure. Our nation has become increasingly aware and is attempting to make strides for the betterment of society, for instance placing anti bullying laws into effect. Everyone has rights, yes, but everything comes at a price. It is our job as human beings to be responsible with our rights and regard the feelings of others. As Hadrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad(aba) has said:

"Let it not be that in the name of freedom of speech of the entire world be destroyed."



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RELIGION & SCIENCE

Male Circumcision: Odds that have favored the practice,
By Zia H Shah MD, Chief Editor of the Muslim Times

Female circumcision, which is now called female genital mutilation (FGM), is the ritual removal of some or all of the external female genitalia and has met universal condemnation. Studying it helps us contrast it with male circumcision and how one has been rejected by human conscience and reason and science and the other glorified and recommended.

Over 130 million women and girls have experienced FGM in the 29 countries in which it is concentrated. The age at which it is conducted varies from days after birth to puberty; in half the countries for which national figures are available, most girls are cut before the age of five. In Egypt almost 90% of women have gone through this horrific practice. FGM has been outlawed or restricted in most of the countries in which it occurs.

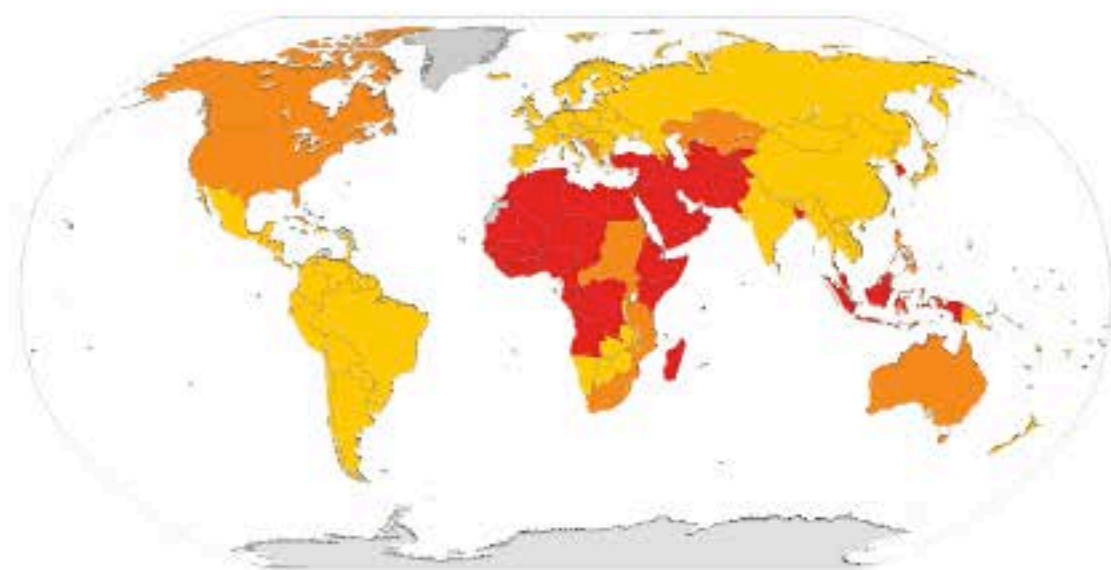
Male circumcision could have met a similar fate but it was not to be.

Male circumcision is not only practiced by 1.5 billion Muslims, 16 million Coptic Christians and 15 million Jews, but, in USA, a largely Protestant Christian country, a large portion of males are circumcised. Data from a national survey conducted from 1999 to 2002 found that the overall prevalence of male circumcision in the United States was 79%; 91% of boys born in the 1970s, and 83% of boys born in the 1980s were circumcised.

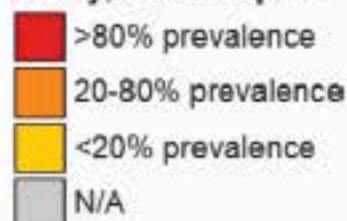
There have been international efforts since the 1970s to persuade practitioners to abandon FGM, and in 2012 the United Nations General Assembly, recognizing FGM as a human-rights violation, voted unanimously to intensify those efforts.

Male circumcision could have met a similar fate but it was not to be.

The fact of the matter is that male circumcision has been recommended for all of Africa for health reasons and now studies indicate that about 62% of African males are circumcised.



Male circumcision rate by country according to the World Health Organization's 2007 review of the global trends and determinants of prevalence, safety, and acceptability of circumcision.^[9]



Health effects of FGM depend on the type of the procedure, but can include recurrent infections, chronic pain, cysts, an inability to get pregnant, complications during childbirth and fatal bleeding. There are no known health benefits.

Male circumcision could have met a similar fate but it was not to be.

For centuries the Christian apologists had criticized Islam and Judaism for male circumcision and sang the praises of their fore-fathers and their customs. Even in 2012 we heard of political activism in Germany to ban the practice of male circumcision. Little did they know that God will over throw their self indulgence, with a very small virus, only 0.1 micron in size, namely HIV virus and establish the utilitarian values of His revealed law, in Judaism and Islam?

Circumcised men have a lower incidence of AIDS, syphilis, and other sexually transmitted diseases than uncircumcised men. In addition, their female partners have a lower risk of cervical cancer. In 2007 the World Health Organization (WHO) reviewed several studies of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) in men living in Africa and found that male circumcision reduced their risk of heterosexually acquired infection by significant amounts (ranging from 48 to more than 60 percent). The resulting WHO report recommended that circumcision become a standard tool within comprehensive programs for the prevention of HIV.

If AIDS had not reached epidemic proportions WHO would not have promoted a practice that until then was perceived as a religious practice. But, it was not to be.

Until the 1980s FGM was widely known as female circumcision, which implied an equivalence in severity with male circumcision. The Kenya Missionary Council began referring to it as the sexual mutilation of women in 1929, following the lead of Marion Scott Stevenson, a Church of Scotland missionary. References to it as mutilation increased throughout the 1970s. Anthropologist Rose Oldfield Hayes called it female genital mutilation in 1975 in the title of a paper, and in 1979 Austrian-American researcher Fran Hosken called it mutilation in her influential *The Hosken Report: Genital and Sexual Mutilation of Females*.

The Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children and the World Health Organization (WHO) began referring to it as female genital mutilation in 1990 and 1991 respectively, and in April 1997 the WHO, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) issued a joint statement using that term.

Male circumcision could have met a similar fate but it was not to be.

Not only WHO has been advocating male circumcision, but so has Center for Disease Control in USA (CDC) and the former First Lady of USA, Hilary Clinton. It would not have been the case if HIV had not become an epidemic in the last few decades, which has killed 25 million people and is presently infecting more than 32 million.

Several small studies have concluded that women with FGM suffer from anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. Feelings of shame and betrayal can develop when women leave the culture that practices FGM and learn that their condition is not the norm. A systematic review and meta-analysis in 2013 examined 15 studies involving 12,671

women from seven countries. The analysis concluded that women with FGM were twice as likely to report no sexual desire and 52 percent more likely to report dyspareunia (painful sexual intercourse). One third reported reduced sexual feelings

Male circumcision could have met a similar fate but it was not to be. CDC has recognized that male circumcision benefits outweigh the risks as it cuts risk for HIV, STDs and penile cancer.

Where do these procedures both male and female come from?

The Greek geographer Strabo (c. 64 BCE – c. 23 CE) wrote about FGM after visiting Egypt around 25 BCE (right). The philosopher Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 BCE – 50 CE) also made reference to it: "the Egyptians by the custom of their country circumcise the marriageable youth and maid in the fourteenth (year) of their age, when the male begins to get seed, and the female to have a menstrual flow." It is mentioned briefly in a work attributed to the Greek physician Galen (129 – c. 200 CE): "When [the clitoris] sticks out to a great extent in their young women, Egyptians consider it appropriate to cut it out."

Another Greek physician, Aëtius of Amida (mid-5th to mid-6th century CE), offered more detail in book 16 of his *Sixteen Books on Medicine*, citing the physician Philomenes. Male circumcision on the other hand has religious basis and is mentioned in the Bible and Hadith. Encyclopedia Britannica has the following to say about male circumcision:

In many cultures, circumcision is also regarded as being of profound religious significance. In Judaism, for instance, it represents the fulfillment of the covenant between God and Abraham (Genesis 17:10–27), the first divine command of the Pentateuch—that every male child shall be circumcised. That Christians were not obliged to be circumcised was first recorded biblically in Acts 15.

According to the book of Genesis not only the prophet Abraham was circumcised, but so were Ishmael and Isaac.

Narrated Abu Huraira: Allah's Apostle Muhammad(sa),

"Five practices are characteristics of the Fitra: circumcision, shaving the pubic region, clipping the nails and cutting the mustaches short." This is not only mentioned in the book of Bukhari but also in the book of Muslim and other Hadith books.

Jesus(as) was born and raised as a Jew and followed and interpreted the Jewish Law, all his life. A narrative in the Christian Gospel of Luke makes a brief mention of the circumcision of Jesus. When St. Paul came on the scene, some 20 years after Jesus was put on the cross and took on himself to preach to the Gentiles, he hit a road block. He discovered that the Gentiles were not ready to go through the ordeal of adult circumcision to be Christians. So, in a moment of Machiavellian creativity, St. Paul came up with the idea of over throwing the yoke of Moses' Law and called dietary restrictions and circumcision a curse, even though he himself being Jewish had been circumcised. As the generations of Christians idolized and idealized Pauline teachings, a line was drawn in sand. For centuries to come, the Jews maintained the tradition of Patriarch Abraham and Christians condemned it. Islam preserved everything worthwhile in the previous religions and scriptures and as Islam spread, the tradition of male circumcision became common among the masses, throughout the globe. The conflict created by St. Paul continued for centuries, but, the plot began to thicken in the last few decades with the arrival of the HIV pandemic. What the scientists and health professions found was that Abraham, Isaac, Ishmael, Moses, Jesus, John the Baptist, who baptized Jesus(as) and Muhammad(sa) were all on the right track and the only odd man out is St. Paul!

Today, the world sociopolitical scene is dominated by the Abrahamic faiths, but it did not have to be so. If Abrahamic faiths had been a small minority like Zoroastrians in a world run by the Buddhist and the Hindus, male circumcision could have suffered the same fate as that of FGM, but it was not to be.

Epilogue:

The Holy Qur'an states,

"Do they seek a religion other than Allah's, while to Him submits whosoever is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, and to Him shall they be returned?" (3:84).

The revealed teachings of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, when properly understood and put in the context of time, should have a benefit for humanity, if they are from All-Knowing God. But, this is only possible if the teachings are properly recorded, preserved and understood.

Here our reason, logic and science come to our rescue to pick up utilitarian and universal principles from the scripture and distinguish them from what has erroneously seeped into the religious teachings.

We want to cherish the baby and throw away the bath water



"And certainly We created man of an extract of clay, Then We made him a small seed in a firm resting-place. Then We made the seed a clot, then We made the clot a lump of flesh, then We made (in) the lump of flesh bones, then We clothed the bones with flesh, then We caused it to grow into another creation, so blessed be Allah, the best of the creators. Then after that you will most surely die. Then surely on the day of resurrection you shall be raised" Referring this Quranic verse, Dr. Keith Moore says: "This verse from the Koran states that God made you from a drop and then changed the drop into a leech-like structure which soon changed into a chewed like substance that then took the shape of bone and was clothed with flesh" "I was amazed at the scientific accuracy of these statements which were made in the 7th century A.D"

Dr. Moore
was Professor of Anatomy
and
Chairman of the
Department,
Faculty of Medicine,
University of Toronto.



HAADITH

SAYINGS OF THE

PROPHET

MUHAMMAD(sa)

Prayers of the Holy Prophet:

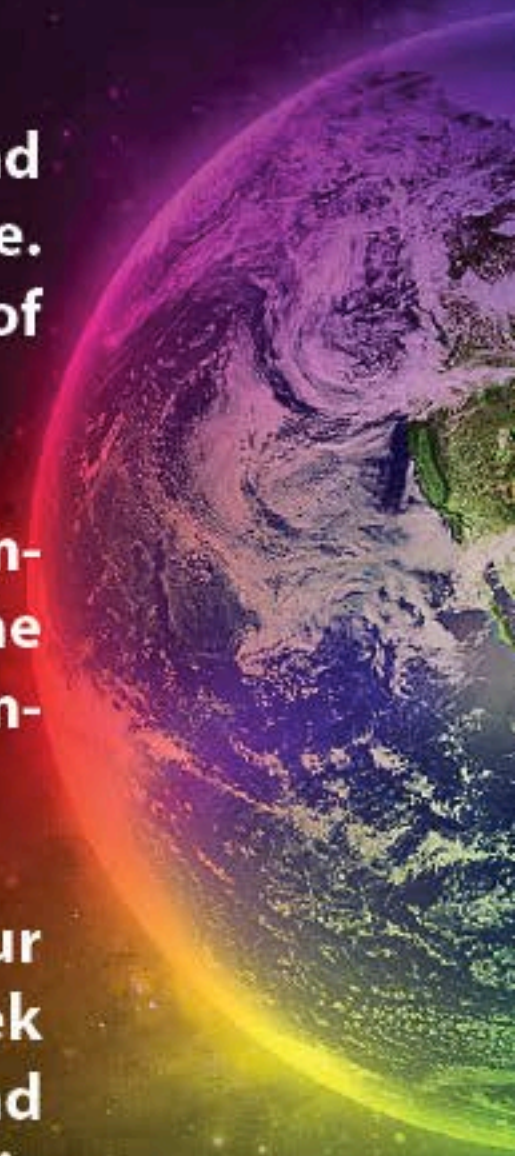
"O Allah, I beg Your forgiveness and protection in this world and in the world hereafter."

"O Allah, I beg you to grant me the ability to do good and refrain from evil deeds. Confer the love of the poor on me. When you intend to put people in trials, take control of my soul without putting it in trial."

"O Allah, make me such a person who thanks You immensely, remembers You a great deal and follows the path of Your pleasure. Enable me to safeguard Your important injunctions (with my actions)."

"O Allah, we seek every good thing from You which Your Messenger Muhammad (sa) sought from you. We seek refuge from evil from which Your Prophet Muhammad (sa) sought refuge. You are the One whose assistance is solicited. So it is essential to pray to You."

"O Allah, protect me with Islam in every situation, standing, seated and lying down. Do not permit a jealous enemy to gloat on me. O Allah, I beg You for every good which is in your treasure house. I seek Your shelter from every evil which is in Your control"



NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS

**Imams failing young Britons,
says Ahmadiyya Muslim leader
Caliph believes we must reform jihadis and put
pressure on those countries who fund ISIS**



Mirza Masroor Ahmad: Islamic teachers should also teach love of country Photograph: Observer

Young British Muslims are being let down by clerics who are under-educated and fail to preach in English, according to a leading religious figure who called for higher standards to be set down for those who can become imams.

Mirza Masroor Ahmad, spiritual leader or caliph to millions of Ahmadiyya Muslims around the world, said it was shameful that Britain had lost 500 or so young people to Islamic State (Isis) and attacked the group for paying money to teenagers to join their "barbaric" fight. He said Muslim leaders in the UK should be teaching "love of country" as well as love of god to disaffected young men and women and working harder to promote the peaceful message of Islam.

"The young people here have been raised in this country and they understand English, they should not be having to hear the messages of the Qur'an in Urdu or Punjabi, or just in Arabic alone. They should be well versed in their religious education as well as in their secular education in English," said the caliph.

Ahmadiyya is a sect of Islam seen as heretical by some Muslims, and its believers are persecuted in many countries, particularly Pakistan. The sect, currently celebrates its 125th year, opened London's first mosque in 1926. Its mosque in Morden, Surrey – western Europe's largest mosque complex – this month hosted a peace symposium where the caliph's keynote speech was attended by cabinet ministers Justine Greening and Ed Davey and by dozens of multi-faith dignitaries from around the world.

The caliph spoke of Islamic anger against extremism and called for wider efforts for peace.

He told the Observer the British government should be forgiving to returning jihadis. "These are the frustrated people, educated people, they don't get a proper job here and so the education is not giving them any return. They are frustrated. I myself feel their frustration. These people deserve a second chance. If they come back, of course we have to be vigilant and keep an eye on them."

The caliph said that Britain's small Ahmadiyya community had lost none of its young people to Isis, attributing this to the sect's tradition of investing heavily in youth work that encouraged children to grow up understanding the peaceful teachings of Islam. He has called on other Muslims to help in drawing widespread attention to the verses of the Qur'an that promote peace, but he also attacked the reluctance of the international community to tackle Isis where it hurts: funding. Isis, he said, was not only well-equipped but could afford to offer thousands to the young fighters they recruit. "In other countries their families are given money – even here, if he goes he gets a lump sum of money.

"Isis is getting millions of dollars flowing to them, from Saudi, from Kuwait. All the intelligence agencies and the governments understand this. I talked to a head of a European government just the other day, and he said to me, 'How do we stop this?'" I said, 'You know already how we stop it – you stop the funding, you know where it is coming from.' He just laughed and didn't say anything. They know it, they understand it, but they have their party politics that will never allow them to do anything.

"We all should try to pressurize our governments. We have to take them to task. People want peace. It is not us who have lost hope. What will it take? Until they get nuclear weapons?" He said that was perfectly feasible when extremists have friends in power in nuclear states like Pakistan. But equally the caliph, who was exiled from Pakistan in 2003, said he had hope that extremism would be conquered. "What did the Taliban and Al-Qaida gain? Their achievement was much higher 20 years ago than now. The same fate awaits ISIS."

He said it would take decades for Islam to recover from the damage to its reputation. "A lot of sensible people are trying to understand that Islam is not bad but it's hard at the moment," he said. "If Isis kill 10 people, it is widely aired. If we pledge 1,000 to peace, nobody cares."

By: Tracy McVeigh
Saturday 15 November 2014

TELEGRAM & GAZETTE STAFF By Paula J. Owen

FITCHBURG — Members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community are waging what they call an awareness campaign against extremism and radicalization in an effort to show that radical jihadists are far removed from the true teachings of Islam.

Furqan Mehmud, regional youth leader for Ahmadiyya communities in the Fitchburg and Boston areas, Connecticut and New York, said the group is teaching kids to speak out against terrorist groups like the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, known as ISIS, through the "Stop the Crisis" campaign and teaching them how to wage a "jihad of the pen."



Some American Muslims are experiencing bullying and racism, he said, because of a lack of understanding of who most Muslims and the radicalization of a small segment of Muslim youth. Many Muslim youth don't know how to respond to the prejudice, he said.

"Unfortunately, in light of recent events, there is a growing thought among some that there is something inherent within the religion of Islam which incites people to violence and extremism," he said.

As a result, he said, some believe Islam itself leads to radicalization.

"Sometimes the perspective of Islam amongst the general public in America can be based entirely on what is commonly seen on television, which often only shows the tiny handful of extremists," he said. "It's ironic though, because the very word Islam is actually derived from the Arabic root-word 'Salima,' which means peace."

Last week, Mr. Mehmud organized a "Stop the Crisis" presentation at Fitchburg State University and is planning others in the region to help spread the message, he said.

Mr. Mehmud's parents moved to the United States from Pakistan, where members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community are persecuted and imprisoned for their beliefs.

Extremism and radicalization have become associated with Islam, he said, but radicalization is not a problem that can be traced to any one religion.

"It is a problem that occurs among people of all creeds and convictions," he said. "It is a problem that we find in the twisted people of every society, from every background. ... So if today, we see an extremely minute handful of Muslims deviating toward extremism and radicalization, we should know that it is not Islam that motivates them, and that what we see today in the form of various extremist groups is just another set of warped individuals who use violence to further their political goals."

In cases of people such as Justin Bourque, Timothy McVeigh, Anders Breivik and Damian Clairmont, who carried out terrorist acts, Mr. Mehmud said the common factors are age, impressionability and discontentment.

"Unstable youth, dissatisfied with society and looking for a greater purpose, want to change the world and give vent to their frustrations," he said. "These are the people most susceptible to becoming radicalized. This is the recipe for radicalization. Not religion."

Mr. Mehmud said it is important for people to have some perspective and remember that the overwhelming majority of the more than 2 million Muslims living in the United States are peaceful, law-abiding citizens who love America as their home and add to its harmony. American converts to Islam are also misrepresented, he said.

"They are not deranged or misguided," he said. "They too have been largely misrepresented. Sure, you hear about the Alton Alexander Nolens and John Walker Lindhs, but what about the many examples of Westerners who became Muslim and didn't turn to extremism, but rather felt a great and positive change within themselves, like Karim Abdul Jabbar, Muhammad Ali and others?"

Ross L. Caputi, 30, of Fitchburg, attended the presentation at FSU. He is a Catholic who said he is concerned about "Islamaphobia" in the United States. Mr. Caputi said he saw racism and bigotry toward Muslims firsthand while serving in the Marines Corps in Fallujah, Iraq, from June 2004 to January 2005. He produced and directed a documentary, "Fear Not the Path of Truth," about the issue.

"I was part of a big operation in Fallujah," the FSU English graduate student said. "There were high numbers of civilian deaths, extremely high numbers of displaced people, and the city itself that once had a population over 350,000 was destroyed and leveled to the ground. Ever since that experience I have been trying to understand better. I'm most upset about the false idea Americans have about the people we were fighting against — this widespread idea that they hated us because Islam taught them to hate Americans. That was false and nothing was done by the military to counter that false belief."

He said he sees the Stop the Crisis campaign as a way for the Muslim community to educate more Americans about what Islam is really about.

"I don't think we understand enough as a society what the teachings of Islam are," he said. "I think there is a widespread belief that the teachings of Islam inherently incite people to violence. Furqan, through scripture in the Koran, showed that it forbids the use of violence except under strict circumstances. Another theme that is really important that Furqan showed in the scripture is that it obligates Muslims to be good citizens in the nation they are living in and to be patriotic."

The average American does not have much contact with the Islamic religion, he said, and does not realize that it does not teach violence and there is no connection with terrorism. He said he believes groups like ISIS attract youth

He is not alone in these views. And there are many reasons — our dysfunctional system of justice and social services delivery system has disillusioned the masses. Private TV channels, intellectuals, religious class and state institutions have played their role to perpetuate and expand this disillusionment. Anti-democracy sentiments have spread especially in religious parties which have traditionally received negligible electoral success. The JUI F talks of democracy, for it have enjoyed sufficient electoral benefits.

***Together we can conquer hatred
Every human life is sacred and
we cry for each loss***

Source: The Guardian
By Michael Haines and Barbara Henning,
October 17, 2014



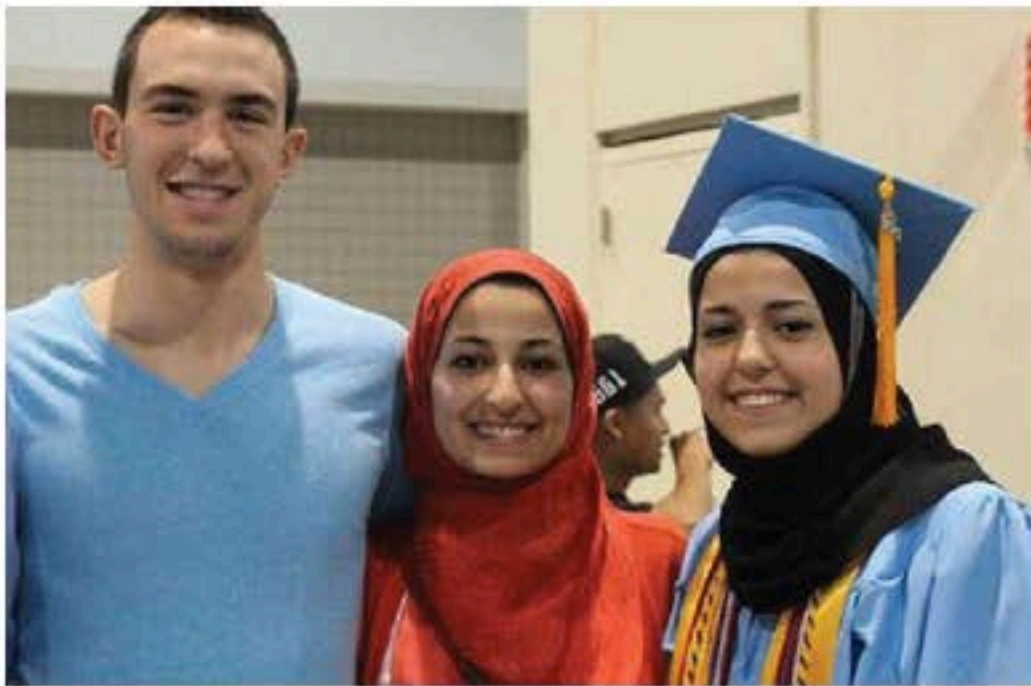
Tomorrow afternoon a memorial service will be held for David Haines, one of the three Britons kidnapped by Isis in Syria. David and Alan Henning travelled to Syria to help their fellow man by delivering vital humanitarian support to those who needed it most. Their desire to help was not driven by their religion, race or politics, but by their humanity. David and Alan were never more alive than when helping to alleviate the suffering of others. They gave their lives to this cause and we are incredibly proud of them.

We are writing this letter because we will not allow the actions of a few people to undermine the unity of people of all faiths in

our society. How we react to this threat is also about all of us. Together we have the power to defeat the most hateful acts. Acts of unity from us all will in turn make us stronger and those who wish to divide us weaker. David and Alan's killers want to hurt all of us and stop us from believing in the very things which took them into conflict zones – charity and human kindness. We condemn those who seek to drive us apart and spread hatred by attempting to place blame on Muslims or on the Islamic faith for the actions of these terrorists.

We have been overwhelmed by the messages of support we have received from the British public and others around the world. We call on all communities of all faiths in the coming weeks and months to find a single act of unity – one simple gesture, one act, one moment – that draws people together, as we saw in Manchester last week and as we are coming together in Perth today. We urge churches, mosques and synagogues to open their doors and welcome people of all faiths and none. All these simple acts of unity will, in their thousands, come together to unite us and celebrate the lives of David and Alan. This is what David and Alan truly stood for.

Denial in Muslim students' deaths:



Deah Shaddy Barakat, 23, of Chapel Hill, and his wife, Yusor Mohammad, 21, and her sister, Razan Mohammad Abu-Salha, 19, of Raleigh, were shot to death at an apartment building in Chapel Hill, N.C. Their murder is a watershed moment for Americans to confront Islamophobia in the country.

The shootings in N.C. are about more than parking dispute. Anti-Muslim attitudes are rife.

Three college students killed on Tuesday in Chapel Hill, N.C., were proud Muslims and proud Americans. Deah Shaddy Barakat, 23, his wife Yusor Abu-Salha, 21, were dedicated to serving humanity, the down trodden, and the suffering. Abu-Salha's sister, Razan Abu-Salha, 19, was a gifted artist at North Carolina State University.

In my mind, it's hard to believe that these Muslim students were not in some way targeted and murdered because of their faith.

A neighbor, Craig Stephen Hicks, has been charged with first-degree murder in the students' deaths. While Chapel Hill Police Chief Chris Blue has suggested that Hicks' motive was based on a "dispute over parking," he also acknowledged "concerns about the possibility that this was hate-motivated."

Let's face it, if Hicks was Muslim, and the victims were white like Hicks, we would be hard pressed to find a headline without the word terrorist. In fact, on social media, #ChapelHill-Shooting trended as number one, with many raising this same question. Yet, there has been an apathetic approach to Muslim victims over the past decade that is reflective of a double standard.

Take the alleged gunman:

Hicks describes himself "anti-theist" and praised the likes of author Richard Dawkins. But don't expect anti-theists to take responsibility for Hicks' alleged actions. While anti-theists blame Islam because Islamic terrorists merely claim to practice Islam, such an argument apparently doesn't apply to anti-theist terrorists.

Hicks is a white male. The government reports that 70% of mass shootings in America over the past 30 years have been by white males. But don't expect any government hearings on why white men are being radicalized, or how to curb their radicalization.

Source: USA Today
By Qasim Rashid



Ladies Corner

Hijab

By: Saima Sheikh

"This is America" shouted a passenger at Darlene Hider, another passenger, On the Delta Airlines plane. She was forced to move at the back of the plane with her kids by a flight attendant. "You force your wife to cover herself" shouted a protester at CAIR Dallas event in January.

"Once they get that established, we're all going to be wearing hijabs," Christine Weick said. "Women, come on, do you want this oppression coming upon you?" These are just a few examples of recent incidences in America where Non-Muslims have expressed their disapproval of Muslim women for wearing a hijab / veil. Then there are remarks like,

Does your husband force you to wear a scarf and coat?" "This is America; you don't have to wear that thing on your head anymore."

Muslim women who choose to wear a hijab have faced discrimination from peers, colleagues, strangers and even family members. The concept of the hijab or veil is not unique to Islam. Women have used the veil to cover their hair since ancient times. Classical Greek and Hellenistic statues sometimes depict Greek women with both their head and face covered by a veil. In Judaism and Christianity, the concept of covering the head was associated with modesty.

Veiling is not a new concept

Veiling is mentioned in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament mentions what Rebekah did before she came face to face with Isaac: "When Re-bek'ah raised her eyes, she caught sight of Isaac and she swung herself down from off the camel. Then she said to the servant 'who is that walking in the field to meet us?' and the servant said 'It is my master' And she proceeded to take a head cloth and to cover herself" (Genesis: 24: 64 and 65).

The New Testament states, "But every woman praying or prophesying with her head uncovered dishonors her head - it is the same as if her head were shaven. For if a woman will not be covered, then let her be shorn! But since it is disgraceful for woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered" (1 Corinthians: 11: 5, 6).

Most traditional depictions of Mary, the mother of Jesus(may peace be upon him) show her veiled. Veiling was a common practice with church-going women and a number of very traditional churches retain the custom especially in Latin American countries such as Mexico, where Catholic nuns still cover their heads.

In Judaism, there are different ways of veiling depending on how strictly a woman adheres to Jewish laws or the Torah. Orthodox Jewish or Hasidic women dress modestly and cover their hair when they go out in public. According to Jewish law, all married women have to cover their hair either with a 'tikhel' (scarf) or a 'sheytl' (wig). Some Hasidic women go as far as to cover their wigs with a scarf. They also dress modestly by wearing long skirts and shirts with long sleeves and high necklines. Some European Hasidic women shave their heads the day after their wedding and repeat it monthly to ensure that not a single strand of hair is ever visible.

In Israel, in some ultra-Orthodox Jewish sects, women have started wearing a full burqa with a face veil. These women are called "Heredi burka sect" or "Taliban mothers". One cannot separate them from Muslim women who wear a full burqa with a face veil (niqab). Some Heredi women go as far as to wear a full shawl that covers them from head to toe similar to what the Afghan women wore under the Taliban.

Veiling in Islam

As is evident, veiling is mentioned in both Judaism and Christianity. In Islam, veiling or 'purdah' is also associated with modesty. Islam lays great emphasis on moral standards of society and provides guidelines on how men and women should interact with each other. The Holy Qur'an first addresses men, "Say to the believing men that they restrain their eyes and guard their private parts. That is purer for them. Surely, Allah is well aware of what they do" (24:31). Then it addresses the women,



"Say to the believing women that they restrain their looks and guard their private parts, and that they display not their beauty or their embellishment except that which is apparent thereof, and that they draw their head coverings over their bosoms..."(24:32). This means that Muslim women dress modestly, cover their heads and wear an outer garment to conceal their beauty from strangers.

The Messiah and Imam of today, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad further expounds on these verses and says, "The Book of God does not aim at keeping women in seclusion like prisoners. This is the concept of those who are not acquainted with the correct pattern of Islamic ways. The purpose of these regulations is to restrain men and women from letting their eyes to rove freely and from displaying their good looks and beauties, for therein lies the good both of men and of women. It should be remembered that to restrain one's looks and to direct them only towards observing that which is permissible is described in Arabic by the expression *"ghadde basar"*... It does not behoove a pious person who desires to keep his heart pure that he should lift his eyes freely in every direction like an animal. It is necessary that such a one should cultivate the habit of *ghadde basar* in his social life. This is a blessed habit through which his natural impulses would be converted into a high moral quality without interfering with his social needs. This is the quality which is called chastity in Islam" (The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam, pp 23-25).

Misconceptions regarding the Islamic veil

There is a common misconception that Muslim women are forced to observe purdah / hijab. Islam teaches that faith is something personal and that each person is responsible for his or her own decisions. It does not say that a man must force the female members of his family to observe Purdah. If this was truly the case and Muslim men were allowed to force the female members of their family to wear a veil or burqa, then more than half of the 1.6 billion Muslims in the world today would be wearing a burqa and a veil. It is apparent that women who choose to wear a veil or burqa do so voluntarily.

New York resident, Nazma Khan, initiated the "World Hijab Day" on February 1st, 2013. She started this campaign as a means to foster religious tolerance and understanding by inviting women (non-Hijabi Muslims/non-Muslims) to experience the hijab for one day. Since the past 12 years this concept has grown leaps and bounds and this year on February 1, 2015, 140 countries across five continents participated in this project.

The head of the world wide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hadrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (may God strengthen his hand) said in his Friday sermon on April 23, 2010,

"We should let the World know that Purdah is for the honor of a lady although some have distorted its form Purdah is to uphold a lady's honor. It is in the nature of women to wish for respect and Islam champions the dignity of women. Purdah is not coercion; it marks the individuality of Muslim women and upholds their honor."

Expounding on this subject further, His Holiness said in his address at the annual convention of the Women's Auxiliary of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, UK on October 26, 2014,

"Today, I have spoken particularly about Purdah because it is often alleged that Purdah takes away women's rights. However, we know that this is not the case and the truth is that Purdah and Hijab actually establish the true dignity, independence and freedom of women. Hijab does not only give women physical security but is also a key means of giving them spiritual security and purity of heart."



Veiling promotes self-confidence in women

I started observing purdah (scarf and coat) about nine years ago. I always had the feeling that as a Muslim woman, I was not fulfilling one of God's commandments, but I always made an excuse that if I started observing now, people might respond negatively. The very first day that I started to observe purdah, we went out to a restaurant. I knew it would be a good test to see how people would react. There were some stares, but on the whole, it was a good experience.

I am very active in my community and do a lot of volunteer work. A few days later, when I went to volunteer at my son's school, someone asked me why all of a sudden I had started to wear hijab. I told them that this is part of my religion, and, therefore, I decided to start observing purdah now. I explained to them that in Islam, hijab is a means of protecting women and providing them with freedom from many social ills. Purdah isn't just about covering the outside but extends to a woman's heart and mind as well. This means that their thoughts and actions should reflect love and respect towards fellow human beings. Ever since I started observing purdah, I have felt stronger and more confident. As a Muslim woman, I am telling men, that I shouldn't be judged by my appearance but by my intellect.

HOW MUSLIM WOMEN CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

By, Saadia Faruqi

Nobody can deny that the picture of Islam and Muslims is quite ugly at the moment, mostly due to the actions of some who call themselves Muslims. One aspect of this ugliness is the way that countries, cultures and individuals treat women. True, there are big issues such as women not being able to drive in Saudi Arabia, but there are also the smaller, more insidious ways in which Muslims themselves limit how women live and work. Many communities pressure women to stay at home and not participate in politics, defense or other supposedly dangerous pursuits.

But the reality is that Islam has not limited women, only mankind has. From the time of the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, we have countless examples of Muslim women who whole-heartedly participated in the protection and maintenance of their communities. There was Umme Amara

, whom the Holy Prophet(sa) observed was a better fighter than any man, because her courage and mastery with weapons surpassed that of male warriors. She continued to fight in battles throughout her life and even after the Prophet's(sa) death, until she lost her hand in the Battle of Aqraba. There was Hadrat Aisha(ra) who became not only a scholar and teacher of both men and women, but also led the Muslims in battle. When Muslim women read about the exploits of these esteemed personalities we should not just have a sense of pride in our religious heritage but also an understanding that Islam doesn't limit what we can do. The stories of these women should serve as a reminder about what Islam really offers to women in terms of freedom, creativity, and authority.

Historically, war, injustice and oppression has always been an opportunity for Muslim women to prove themselves. Noor Inayat Khan (1914 – 1944) was an Indian Muslim descended from Tipu Sultan, but more importantly the first female radio operator sent from Britain into occupied France to aid the French Resistance. Interested in music, poetry and writing from a young age, Noor decided to set aside her pacifist Sufi upbringing and participate in the war in order to help change Western perceptions about Indians and Muslims. Noor once said: "I wish some Indians would win high military distinction in this war. If one or two could do something in the Allied service which was very brave and which everybody admired, it would help to make a bridge between the English people and the Indians." Noor was a successful spy during the French Resistance and was finally executed by the Nazis.

Afghanistan, past and present is another showcase of Muslim women's bravery. One Afghani woman of substance who emerged on Afghanistan's political climate was Meena Keshwar Kamal, a women's rights activist born in 1956. While studying at Kabul University, Meena formed the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) in 1977 to promote equality and education for Afghani women. In 1979 she began a public campaign against Russian forces and their puppet government established in Afghanistan, including street processions, college meetings and more. In 1981 she launched a feminist magazine Payam-e-Zan (Women's Message), as well as the Watan Schools for refugee women and children, and a hospital for treating wounded Afghan soldiers. Strongly and vocally opposed to the Soviet occupation of her country, Meena became the face of the Afghani resistance movement. A poetess, she used words to explain her motivations:

"I've been reborn amidst epics of resistance and
courage/ I've learned the song of freedom in the last
breaths, in the waves of blood and in victory/ Oh compa-
triot, Oh brother, no

longer regard me as weak and incapable/ With all my strength I'm with you on the path of my land's liberation."

As a result of her political activism and her championing of women's causes, Meena was assassinated probably by the Afghan arm of the KGB in 1987. She died at the age of 30, accomplishing in a decade what very few women achieve in their lifetimes.



In Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto was an exceptional role model for Pakistani women, succeeding in breaking stereotypes, striking down limitations, and shattering glass ceilings. In 1982 at age 29 she became the first female leader of a major political party in Pakistan, and in 1988 became the 11th Prime Minister – the first woman elected to lead a Muslim country and incidentally, also Pakistan's first and only female head of state. She was re-elected again in 1993 for a second term, but later corruption charges and economic instability led to her political downfall and self-exile to the U.A.E. in 1998. Upon her return to Pakistan in 2007, she was assassinated, resulting in being named one of seven winners in the United Nations Prize in the Field of Human Rights in 2008. Today there are many women political leaders in the Muslim world, proving that a woman can easily juggle home and work and make their societies better for it.

What is more, today we again live in times of fear, war and oppression. As a result, Muslim women are again rising up to help their male counterparts and liberate their societies. Consider in Iraq, Ummayyah Naji Jabara, the daughter of a Sunni tribal leader who had been assassinated by Al Qaeda seven years ago. Ummayyah became a politician herself, an advisor to the governor of the Salahuddin province. When ISIS began its campaign of terrorism and mass murder in Iraq this month, she took up a Kalashnikov against them. She was killed by a sniper, but she had already killed several ISIS fighters before her death. Consider in Libya, Salwa Bugaighis, a Libyan human rights activist involved in the Libyan uprising which saw the end of Muammar Gaddafi as Libya's dictator. She also was a former member of the National Transitional

Council, and vice-president of a committee that worked on national dialogue in Libya. She was assassinated when a group of gunmen broke into her home and fired at her.

Today there are women who form armies to fight the enemy in Iraq. Today, there is Ayesha Farooq, Pakistan's first and only combat-ready F-16 fighter pilot taking part in the aerial bombardments in North Waziristan. Today there is Somaia Ramish, unable to go to school during the Taliban's reign but now a university student recently been elected to the local council in the Afghan elections.

What can we learn from these women? Whether we are male or female, there is a lesson for us in these tales. Stories of the past can serve as powerful motivators for all of us, but for Muslims in particular, the tales of intelligent, brave, creative and influential Muslim women can serve to lift us all collectively into a sense of pride in our faith. They can empower us as women, they can lead us to be better partners and supporters with men. They can teach us all what Islam really stands for, equality rather than oppression.





FROM THE ARCHIVE

Muslim Sunrise – 1956-Issue 4

Freedom of Preaching and Political Entanglements

It is agonizing to learn that even in our "enlightened" age, there are some nations which claim to be democratic in their convictions yet they deny such basic liberties as preaching of one's faith. News came recently from Spain that government of that country objected against any propagations of Islam. In fact the Spanish government threatened a Muslim missionary that he would be expelled from Spain. It is deplorable to learn that the Nehru Government has also been waging a policy of making it difficult for any foreign missionaries to stay in India. In our opinion, preaching of one's religious convictions is one of the basic civil liberties the denial of which directly conflicts with the democratic principles.

The case for the safeguarding of these precious civil liberties has been partly spoiled by those missionaries who have found it expedient to dabble in the internal politics of the countries of their visit. One such case has been mentioned as that of Mr. Billy Graham's visits to the Far East. Speaking in India, for instance, Mr. Graham suggested that the United States might well give Mr. Nehru a "streamlined air conditioned train."

The reverberations of this type of suggestion were noticeable immediately. "There you are. It is as simple as that," said the Manila Chronicle. "The United States is called on to sell American friendship to India in the same manner that she sells, say toothpaste or brassier." The Manila Herald and the Daily Mirror were equally outraged. They questioned the advisability of sending such as Mr. Graham to preach the message of Christianity.

The Christian Century (February 29, 1956) points out that Dr. Graham is not the first one to interfere in politics of another country. "There is altogether too much truth in some of the Chinese charges that American missionaries have been involved in American political policy and action," says this magazine.

If this important distinction between preaching one's faith and intruding in the politics of the other countries can be faithfully preserved the task of winning these civil liberties all over the world will become much easier.





Questions & Answers

Q: Explain the arrival of Islam in USA?

A:-From the 1880s to 1914, several thousand Muslims immigrated to the United States from the Ottoman Empire, and from parts of South Asia; they did not form distinctive settlements, and probably most assimilated into the wider society. Once very small, the Muslim population of the US increased greatly in the 20th century, with much of the growth driven by rising immigration and conversion. In 2005, more people from Islamic countries became legal permanent United States residents — nearly 96,000 — than in any year in the previous two decades.

American Muslims come from various backgrounds, and are one of the most racially diverse religious groups in the United States.

Q:-When did the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) first convey the message of Islam to the people of America and did anyone accept the message?

A:-The message of Islam was first conveyed to the people of America, in 1885, by the founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, who claimed to be the Promised Messiah of the Latter Days, promised in the scriptures of all great religions. He wrote a pamphlet in Urdu, got it translated into English, and mailed it to thousands of people, including various clergy of Europe and America.

As a result of the circulation of this pamphlet in America, considerable interest in Islam was created in a section of the American people. A journalist, who later became the American consulate in the Philippines, became deeply interested in Islam, and started correspondence with the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him). Mr. Webb wrote his first letter to Promised Messiah (peace be upon him) in 1887. His correspondence is one of the latter's book, "Shana-i-Haq." Mr. Webb was so impressed by the truth of Islam that he resigned his office of consulship and started preaching Islam

in America. He supplied the editor of "The Review of Religions" (the English magazine of the Ahmadiyya Movement, published from Qadian, at that time) with one thousand addresses of distinguished Americans. This indicates how highly he appreciated the magazine of the Movement. He also revised the English translation of the Promised Messiah's book, "Islami Usool ki Philsophi" (The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam).

It is not known whether he formally joined the Ahmadiyya Movement, but there is no doubt that he accepted Islam.

In 1904, one American, Mr. Anderson, formally joined the Ahmadiyya Movement. He was given an Islamic name, "Ahmad" by the Promised Messiah, peace and blessing of God be on him.

Q:-Who was the first missionary to the USA?

A:-The first missionary to the USA was Hadrat Mufti Muhammad Sadiq sahib (ra), who was a companion of the Promised Messiah (as). He had come here in 1920.

Q:- What are the names of the Kings of Judah?

Rehoboam
Asa
Jehoram
Athaliah
Amaziah
Joatham
Hezekiah
Amon
Jehoahaz II
Jehoiakin

Abijam
Jehoshapat
Ahaziah
Jehoahaz
Azariah
Ahaz
Manasseh
Josiah
Eliakim
Zedekiah





PERSPECTIVE

Freedom of Hypocrisy

In a town in the back hills, a politician was addressing his constituents. In the back of the room was an old man who was hard of hearing. He tried bending his ear, changing his angle of sitting but he could not understand all the words. After about half an hour into the speech, he was frustrated. He nudged the guy sitting next to him and said, "So What's he in favor of?" The guy replied in a louder than usual voice so the old man could hear him,

"but I don't think he knows either!!"

Politicians are masters of double talk. There are so many reasons why they do it. I could not possibly list them all. I know for sure that they want to let their constituents hear what is appealing to them. Since there always is a difference of opinion among the constituents, so the politicians have to appease both sides. That can only be accomplished by double talk. They have practiced it over centuries and everybody knows it.

The double talk is hypocrisy for whatever purposes it is exercised. It is not limited to politicians.

We have seen examples of hypocrisy in the arena of freedom of speech as well. Some may call it double standards. No matter what you call it, it is unjust behavior. Knowing full well that one is hiding the truth or manipulating it is not exclusive to any particular society. In the modern times, people have taken shelter under the pretense of freedom of speech to voice their bias. They would apply the freedom of expression as they see fit, with double standards.

These days if an African-American person is ridiculed, they call it racism. If someone insults a Jewish person, it is titled anti-Semitism. When someone attacks a religious group, it is called hate speech. However, when the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) is attacked, verbally or graphically, it is heroically heralded as freedom of speech.

I cannot fathom what possible decent purpose or goal a person would have in mind in insulting or ridiculing a prophet. What possible result would one expect from it other than creating hate and frustration for the people who honor the prophet being attacked? In the case of Muslims, it is even more appalling since as a matter of belief, they would not ridicule or insult any other prophet. It is not as a courtesy or accommodation to other faiths but a matter of their belief. One cannot be a Muslim unless he believes in the truthfulness of all the prophets.

The Holy Quran has specifically praised all the prophets and has commanded that our enmity of a people should never drive us to act unjustly. It should never result in insulting and ridiculing their prophets or gods since it would be indecent and unjust. The Holy Quran has also expressed that if we were to do that, it would only invite retaliation from the enemies. They would make derogatory remarks about our God, Allah. There is no other outcome that is possible.

Freedom of speech is an excellent concept when it is exercised with decency and care for the emotions of others. Slandering someone's mother may technically qualify as freedom of speech but is it decent? Is it acceptable in a civilized society? Are there any people in the world who would consider it acceptable? I don't think so. What possible reaction would be expected as a result of such remarks? Same is true for insulting, calling names and ridiculing the prophets who are accepted and honored by so many in every part of the world.

We don't need to consult the philosophers and read scriptures to come up with an answer about our double talk, hypocrisy or double standards. We just have to ask our own conscience and we all know its reply. The response will be quick and clear. Just don't argue with it or try to justify your behavior against it. If, God forbid, your conscience agrees with the hypocrisy and unjust behavior, then you have got much bigger problems.

Meanwhile, Muslims need to obey the commandments of the Holy Quran. When such remarks are made in a meeting or gathering, leave that place until the subject changes. That is precisely what we are commanded to do. Nothing more. We could certainly pray for the people making indecent remarks.

That is a suggestions that promotes goodwill towards all: pray for each other.

(Falahud Din Shams)



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